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MAETERLINCK'S DOGS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
THE CHILDREN'S BLUE BIRD

MAETERLINCK'S DOGS

BY

GEORGETTE LEBLANC-MAETERLINCK

TRANSLATED BY

ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS

WITH 32 ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

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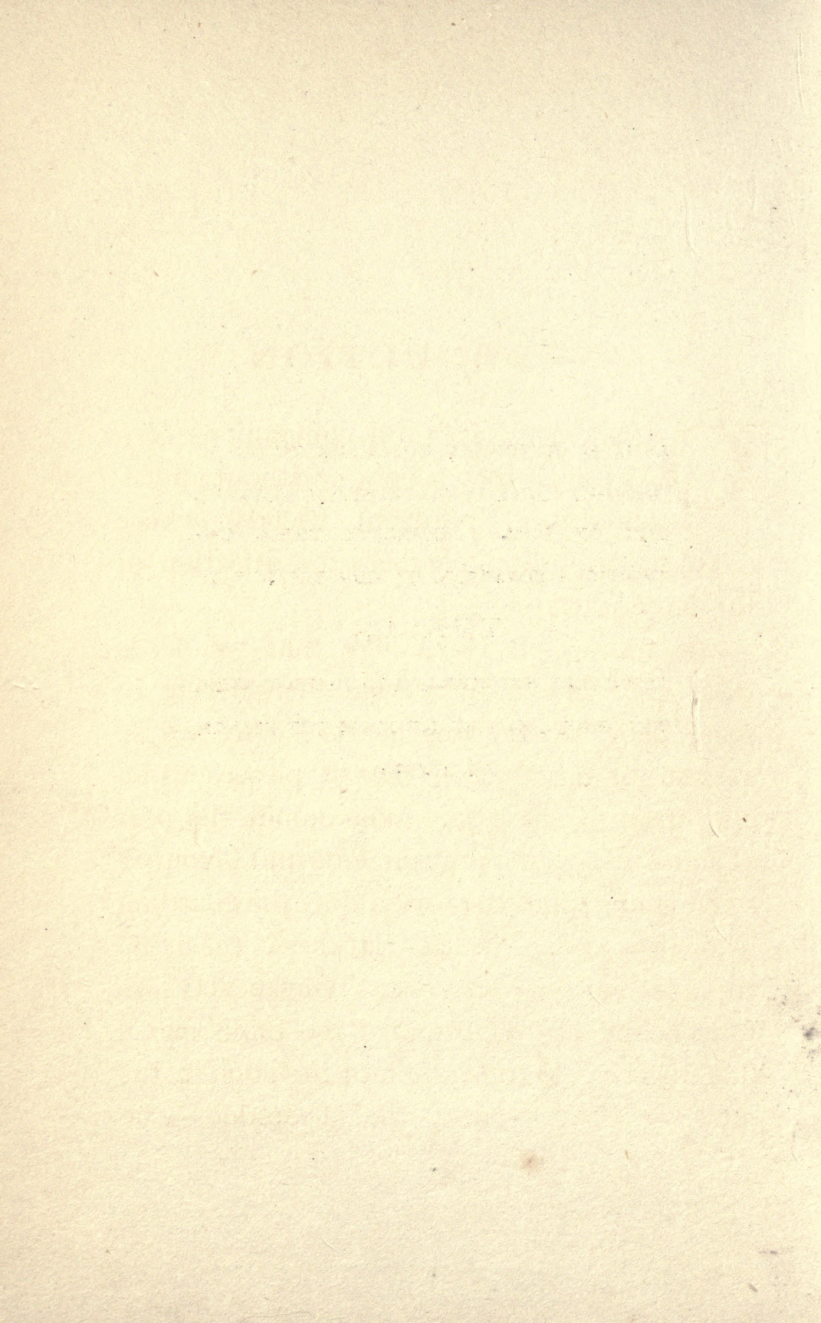
AS IT IS CUSTOMARY TO THANK THOSE TO
WHOM WE OWE THE TRAGIC AND WONDERFUL
GIFT OF LIFE, I DEDICATE THESE UN-
AMBITIOUS PORTRAITS OF OUR FRIENDS TO

TURCO,

THE GREAT NEWFOUNDLAND PRIZE-WINNER,
WHO ONCE DRAGGED ME FROM THE BOTTOM
OF A POND

v

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INTRODUCTION

OUR dogs ! Faithful companions of a life which they venerate without understanding ! Indulgent friends, whose constant adoration compels the affection of the most unwilling !

Are we so greedy of love that we needs must cherish and encourage the offering of these poor unconscious hearts ? Are we so athirst for domination that it pleases us to play towards these ingenuous minds the part of a god dispensing punishments and favours ?

We understand the watch-dog, the guardian who lies awake in the darkness, to signal the approach of intruders. Our hearts are touched by the devotion of the blind man's dog, by the self-abnegation of the pointer, the retriever. We respect the sheep-dog, who

watches over the flock ; the dog of Flanders, who is the poor man's horse, carefully pursuing his strenuous calling ; and we marvel at the police-dog, who fulfils his noblest of all missions in seeking upon the battle-field the bodies of his immolated gods.

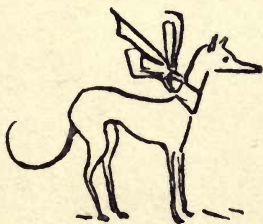
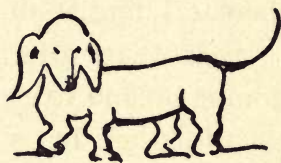
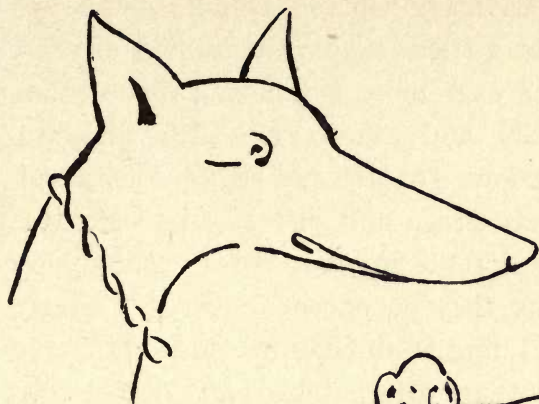
But these worthy quadrupeds are in the canine world what officials, manufacturers, merchants, clergy and their like are in our human society, in a word, the "necessary cog-wheels" of our community. Now, being neither a blind man nor a sportsman, neither a shepherd nor a soldier, I have been able to consider these deserving animals only from a distance ; and I shall speak merely of those who must, in their own world, be regarded as vagabonds, idlers, oddities, or philosophers, that is, as the riff-raff of canine society. Our dogs cultivated no other virtues than those of the heart ; and they understood how to make themselves beloved. In truth I cannot tell you why they were loved ; but do we ever know why we love and are we to be more exacting towards animals than towards



These worthy quadrupeds

men ? My friend Golaud, who lies beside me as I write, a friend whom the fullness of years is making ever more tyrannical, disturbs me continually and affords me little pleasure. Our relations are not unlike the ties which unite a concierge and his tenants, with this difference, that human beings commonly know why they go out of doors and return, whereas I find it difficult to understand the motives that alternately and perpetually prompt Golaud to go out when he is in and to come in when he is out. . . . But we must not anticipate events. I wish in these pages to do homage to all our faithful companions ; and I must travel some distance into the past to find the first of that touching dynasty.

GEORGETTE LEBLANC



Idlers, oddities, or philosophers

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CHAPTER I
LOUIS THE DEBONNAIRE

CHAPTER I

LOUIS THE DEBONNAIRE

I

LOUIS, the Pomeranian, was already past the prime of life when I saw him for the first time. His face and body were buried under an enormous fleece, so that Louis threw his whole soul, his incontestably sensitive soul, into all the various expressions of which the glorious plume that completed his winter costume was capable. His master, when he introduced him to me, said, "He's a good dog;" and I am bound to admit, as I glance back over his reign, a fairly long one, that I do not see him in the bright light of



LOUIS THE DEBONNAIRE.

His face and body were buried under an enormous fleece.

any remarkable trait or incident. He was just "a good dog."

Quiet, upright natures do not attract events.

Once only did Destiny set the Pomeranian a problem whose solution involved the happiness or unhappiness of his life. In solving it



He was inclined to wisdom
and sobriety.

he gave proof of that practical common-sense and sagacity which never betrayed him during his long career.

While still an unthinking ball of wool, Louis was offered, in payment for a picture, to a young painter of Ghent, who at that time was living in the gay if sordid students' quarter. Thus it was that his judicial mind awoke to life in the midst of disorder : a strange caprice of chance, which encourages our good qualities by contrary examples. Louis was by nature a quiet dog and found himself surrounded by excitement ; he was inclined to wisdom and sobriety, neither of which was practised in his environment ; he had serious

tastes, whereas his young master cared for nothing but pleasure! He was clean and conscientious; and he did not know where in the studio to sit down, or meditate, or go to bed; he had no rug, no basket in which to take his rest.

Louis was punctual: punctuality is the basis of canine philosophy. Every self-respecting dog learns, before anything else, to know the hours when his meals are served. Alas, there were days without any meals in his first home; and, as he sat contemplating his meagre mess, he used bitterly to reflect upon his master's excessive detachment from terrestrial joys!

At the age of two, being then in full possession of his faculties, Louis had formed his own conception of the world, which he was very soon to reveal.

Place, a café at Ghent; day, a certain Sunday. The dog, seated on a bench, is gazing out of the window. The Place d'Armes, the social centre of the ancient city, presents a lively scene. Around a band-stand, in which the musicians are doing their utmost, a crowd is indefatigably circling. Only those who have never lived in a provincial town can

fail to understand the importance of this custom.

Round and round they saunter ; and business affairs are settled, marriages arranged. Round once more ; and reconciliations are effected or quarrels enhanced. Round they go ; and at each revolution glances meet, smile calls to smile. Round again ; and the young men brush against the maidens as they pass, while, under the ancient trees of the square, the stealthy darkness falls hurriedly.

Louis does not listen to the remarks which his master exchanges with his friends. Is it not always the same thing ? Pictures, exhibitions, books, poems, newspapers, reviews ? Useless and contemptible interests, the worthy dog says to himself : would it not be much more sensible if they concerned themselves with the comfort of their homes and, above all, their food ? He feels depressed ; he throws a last glance over the square, now deserted and silent. He sighs ; he crouches at full length, adjusting his pointed muzzle between his two fore-paws, and closes his eyes, to dream the eternal dream of a sumptuous feast. But suddenly

he pricks up his ears. They are speaking of him in animated terms :

“ Oh, he’s a capital dog ! ” says his master. “ But he’s a nuisance : I haven’t the food for him.”

“ He’s a handsome dog ; he’s a true Pomeranian,” some one replies.

But a third voice addresses Louis directly :

“ Would you like to come with me ? ”

It is the voice of Destiny !

“ Done ! ” cries the painter, delighted. “ If you like, you can have him for two louis.”

There is a musical tinkling on the marble table ; and Louis’ existence is completely transformed.

“ He’ll try to follow me,” says the old master to the new. “ He’s such a faithful beggar ; and I have no lead.”

While some one asks for a length of cord, Louis is reflecting ; the precaution tickles him. He ought perhaps to betray some emotion ; and yet why should he ? He has nothing to lose ; his philosophy is equal to any demand made upon it. Still, if poverty had not taught him to be niggardly of hope, he would take a certain pleasure in sniffing

at his new master's comfortable overcoat. I have already told you that he was born discreet and practical.

Soon he was trotting at Maeterlinck's heels, with his muzzle down and his tail up, his habitual bearing. Together they strolled through the dark streets ; the air was damp and the pavement slippery ; they had to walk carefully.

A sudden halt ; and Louis' nose collided with one of his god's feet. What was the matter ? Nothing of importance : the master had stopped to speak to a friend. They were standing in the light of a street lamp. The new-comer was speaking excitedly of his latest book of verse.

" Another poet ! " muttered Louis to himself.

A moment later his master resumed his walk. Yes, it was certainly a fine overcoat ; but Louis had a suspicion that his change of master did not imply a change of society.

2

At this period of our story, Maeterlinck was living with his parents in one of those

spacious, friendly houses which are not to be found save in the provinces. Everything about it spoke of order and tranquillity. The well-warmed entrance-hall was bright and cheerful. Beside a stand filled with green plants, the stairs ascended, polished as a mirror. The drawing-room, an inaccessible sanctuary, was opened only on birthdays and other festive or ceremonial occasions ; its furniture slept in white winding-sheets ; and the family-portraits, in their gilt frames, wore a melancholy smile. The dining-room, on the other hand, almost obtruded its existence upon you ; it opened at the back of the hall in a wide, welcoming bay and displayed, behind the glass panes of the cupboards, great heavy pieces of rotund, shiny plate. One felt that the important acts of everyday life were accomplished in this room. A tray was laid on the table, for this was Flanders, where hospitality is the first of duties and where refreshment awaits the possible visitor at every hour of the day.

From all this we may imagine what Louis must have felt on entering Maeterlinck's home. But it was seven o'clock in the

evening ; and, at the sacred hours of meals, the doors of the dining-room were kept respectfully closed. But did not its very soul exhale from those doors, divinely tickling the nostrils of our friend and revealing the measure of the joys which awaited him in this new home ?

Louis quivered with content. Each moment brought with it a fresh rapture. Servants humoured him, calling him by the tenderest names. A lady bent over him in kindly curiosity. This was a very important moment ; for, if the master is an all-powerful god, the mistress is a tutelary goddess. You do not respect her, but you love her. She is the kind and indulgent mother, who arranges matters when you are in a scrape.

Louis examined the goddess. She wore a silk gown and a gold chain ; there was no doubt about it, she was a lady !

That she was small and slender ; that her face was pleasant but a little vague ; that her smooth chestnut hair framed eyes of a faded blue : all this mattered nothing, was of no importance to a dog ; for dogs form judgments more surely than men. They employ for this purpose none of the poor

instruments that lead you and me astray, such as observation, reason, or experience. Their instinct is unfettered; and it never betrays them. They know who will love them of his own accord; they guess whose affections they will have to conquer. This is why Louis, with a triumphant cock to his plummy tail, passed negligently by the mistress of the house, to pay his respects to the formidable individual who, at this moment, seated at the family table, was carving a magnificent joint.

This individual was growling :

“What do we want with a dog in the house? Is it a reasonable excuse for interrupting our meals, for upsetting all the ways of the household?”

He was a just man and a kindly. He loved dogs and Louis did not displease him; but of course he had to growl, in order to assert his power! Punish his children, lecture his wife, reprimand his servants, scold, grumble, disapprove: all these things must a man do, he would tell himself, if he would preserve order in his home.

“I was right!” thought the new-comer.
“This is God the Father! With him I

must be on good terms ; and the sooner the better."

Louis' attitude expressed the most humble respect.

It was as well. The countenance of God the Father, at that moment, was expressive of the most lively discontent. His thick grey eyebrows met together, masking his gaze, as though to rob it for a brief spell of its habitual benevolence. Thunder sat upon his forehead and in his flexible eyebrows, whose eloquence revealed each movement of his mind. The line of the stern, imperious nose was also far from reassuring ; but the mouth beneath it was friendly and adorned with a moustache that seemed full of geniality.

It was a dramatic moment for our worthy Louis, though he did not realize its full importance, for he was better able to guess at the inner man than to judge from outward appearances. And therefore he knew at once that God the Father, for all his thunders, had not an ounce of ill-nature in his heart ; and, without a tremor, Louis sat down beside his chair.

By this action he intended to do him

honour. At the same time it brought him nearer to the joint. Canine homage is never quite void of self-interest.

Peace was quickly made. The dog won sympathy by his good behaviour and his discretion. Moreover, however annoying the event that dared to disturb the sacred hour of dinner, was it fair to hold the innocent beast responsible? God the Father thought it more equitable to vent his ill-humour upon his son and his wife, who were certainly accomplices in the crime.

After dinner, the new-comer was installed as a member of the household. He was taken to the kitchen. It was a dazzling experience! The maids were beginning their meal. As for Louis, he began his all over again. It was a regular debauch. He went from one maid to the other and received, accompanied by the most endearing words, meat, cheese and even cakes! Then, after a short walk along a charming street, he was put to bed in the kitchen, near the stove, on a soft rug laid there especially for him!

It was very late before he slept, for his digestion caused him a good deal of trouble; but then he had so much to think about!

3

Early in the morning, his master called him. He came running to him joyfully, as though the ties between them had existed from childhood ! He recognized his voice ! Yes, yes, this was his master ! The real master, the one and only master, the one who, on the day before, had delivered him from poverty, the young god, with the comfortable overcoat, in whom he had at once divined a friend ! He ran upstairs at the full speed of his four paws, arriving breathless, panting, in an ecstasy of delight, and threw himself upon his master, making him a gift of his whole canine being. The master announced that he was going for a long walk and took up a lead.

But what need was there of a lead ? Hardly had the door closed behind them when the dog questioned his god with a calm and serious gaze :

“ Where are we going ? ” he seemed to say. “ I am ready to follow you to the end of the world.”

There was no doubting his submissiveness or his respect. As on the night before, of his

own accord he took up his position at his master's heels.

The sun was rising, a Flemish sun, a crafty and indeterminate sort of sun, which allows you to look it right in the face and gives you reason both to hope and to despair. But Maeterlinck, who knows that sun of old, knows that it will keep its promises this day and, with his pipe between his teeth, makes his way towards the canal.

After crossing the town, the two friends reach the landing-stage. The understanding between them is quite perfect ; and Maeterlinck congratulates himself upon his acquisition while musing upon the delightful landscape. Ah, those pleasant Flemish canals ! Between the trees that border them they stretch away in straight lines, like watery turnpike-roads, gentler than the earth but just as safe. Transparent highways, brimming with the image of the skies, they seem as though they must lead to the regions of the blest. Suddenly the peaceful mirror is troubled and a cool breeze breathes over the water. The boat is about to call ; a few passengers have arrived. Maeterlinck goes on board. The gangway is soon raised

and the boat proceeds. But where is the dog ?

Is it heedlessness, fear, or discretion ? Louis remains behind. Fatality separates the two friends at the last moment. The dog is on the bank ; he sees his master go away and he can do nothing. He cries and moans ; he stands and watches his happiness depart !

On the deck of the steamer the passengers follow the tragedy with interest :

" Pooh, you'll find him again ! " says one of them.

But Maeterlinck shakes his head :

" I'm afraid not," he replies. " I have only had him since yesterday. He doesn't know me ; he hardly knows the town. It's a pity ; he was a good dog ! "

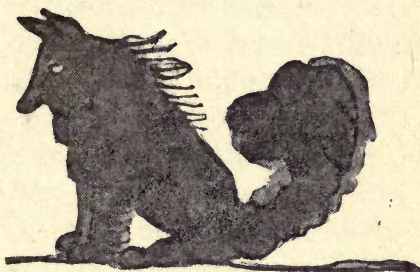
How can we tell what passed through Louis' mind ? Did he behold, receding with the boat, the heavenly meals, the well-warmed house, God the Father and his indulgent consort, the attentive maids and the kitchen, alack, the kitchen, that gleaming palace in which the memory of the past was instantly effaced ?

What I do know is that, an hour later, Louis had once more crossed the town and,

patiently seated outside his new master's house, was waiting for some obliging passer-by to open the gate of his chosen Paradise for him !

4

After this stroke of genius, his reputation was made. He was treated with consideration. He was surrounded with every care; and his long career was spent without mishaps. Of love, the source of all anxieties,



Louis, patiently seated outside his new master's house.

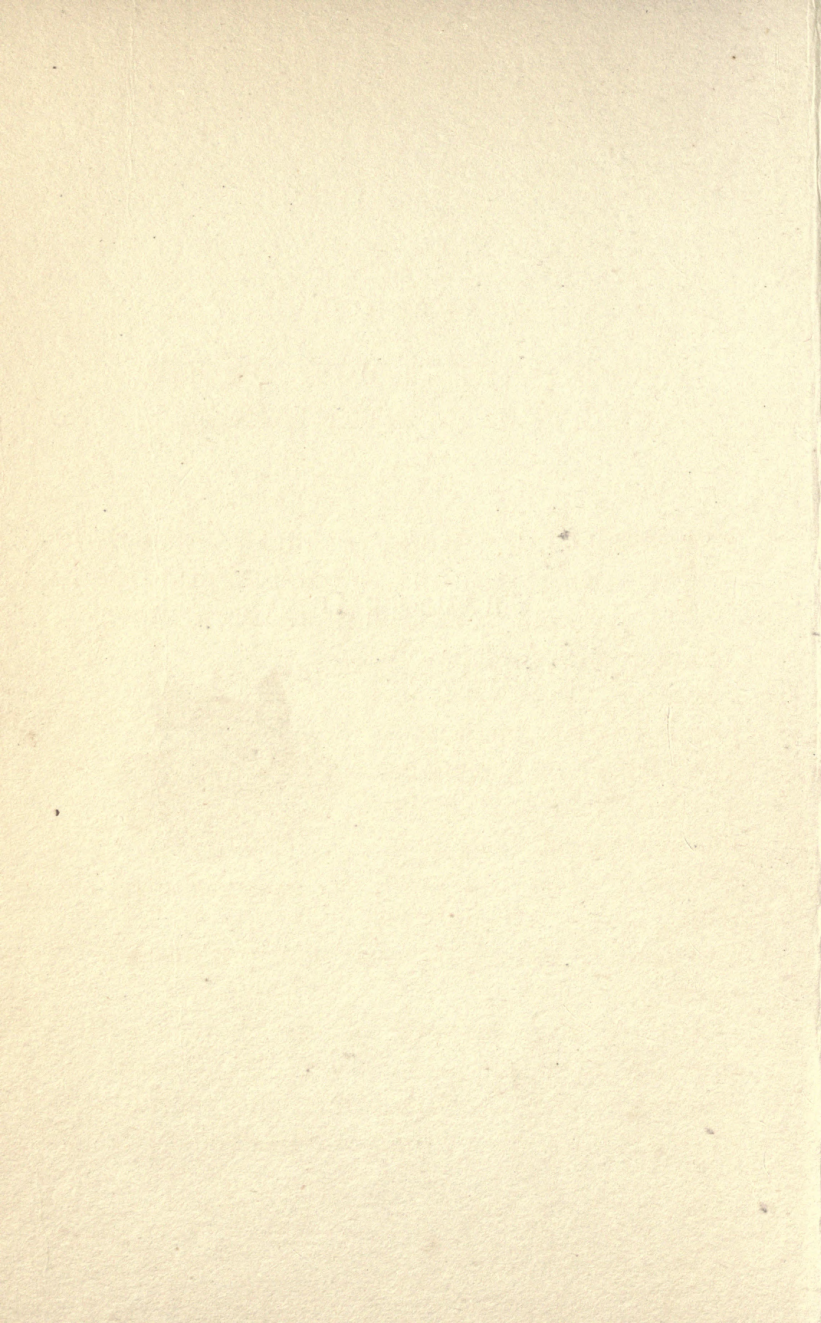
he knew nothing. His morals, which were strictly austere, saved him from that. Virtuous and chaste, he was endowed with such modesty that the least attention roused his indignation. Desiring no relations with his kind, he fled from either sex alike, whereby it was ascertained, very late in the day, that he himself belonged to the weaker sex. However, his name—or hers—was never

changed, for such a change would have unsettled his whole existence ; and, as Louis was never fated to be either wife or mother, the proprieties were in no way offended.

He always retained the memory of his unhappy childhood. Indeed, I have to admit that he was often lacking in generosity, for he did not love the poor and would even insult them with ferocity. His practical mind had taken as its motto, " It is the habit that makes the monk."

At the age of thirteen, his infirmities became too painful for him to bear ; and his god very gently took away his life. Louis made a copious meal and, without knowing or suspecting, ceased to exist.

CHAPTER II
RAYMOND THE CLOWN



CHAPTER II

RAYMOND THE CLOWN; OR, THE CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINER

I

THE little world of dogs, though subject to the greater world of mankind, which flatters itself upon its conscience and has its dreams of justice, is peopled with unfortunates. The victims of ill-luck are legion. There is a destiny for dogs as well as for men, a destiny like our own, which laughs at goodness and beauty and all the charming promises of nature.



RAYMOND THE CLOWN.

This is why, in spite of the choice that presided over the acquisition of our companions, I shall have to trace the portraits of several humble victims of an adverse fate.

The first figure that my memory evokes, after the death of our dear Louis, is that of a diverting and easily diverted little demon, full of sparkle, life and laughter, given to much barking, a creature of infinite drollery. Extremely gentle and affectionate at times,



Raymond had a strange love of dress that made him absolutely human.

he spent many a half-hour on my lap, motionless under the book or writing-pad which rested on his pleasant brown head. Sometimes he would venture to turn a great eye upon me, not unlike the eye of a sentimental frog.

Do you see Raymond now? Only a French bull-dog has an eye like that.

This particular bull-dog's name was Raymond. Why? Nobody knows. He was usually spoken of as "the Nigger Baby;" and the reason for this was obvious: the wide grimace that uncovered his white teeth;

his eyes, of a dull black, unlit by any reflection ; his little nose, roughly carved out of a scrap of ebony, all proclaimed it aloud. Besides, Raymond had a strange love of dress that made him absolutely human. When he was quite small and as yet unable to walk firmly on his short, bandy legs, some one tried a baby's bonnet on him. He wore it without a sign of impatience. Next day, perceiving the bonnet in a corner, he took it in his teeth and carried it to the nurse, who readily put it on him again, for in this headgear



He was a natural actor, a
born clown.

the little bull-dog delighted every one who saw him. Another day, some one draped him in a shawl ; and, soon after this, he was fully dressed. He loved it ; he was a natural actor, a born clown. Disguised as a ballet-girl, jumping through a hoop, or wearing a cap on his head, with a pipe in his mouth, or frisking about in baby-clothes with a doll in his front paws, he used instinctively to

stand on his hind-legs, only resuming his natural position when people ceased to notice him. Unlike his fellows, he had more vanity than greed; the presence of a number of persons acted on his nerves; he was at once here, there and everywhere, wild with excitement and performing a thousand tricks, which he would never have attempted in the family-circle. He seemed fully to understand the flattery and applause of laughter.

What a gold-mine Raymond would have been to a travelling show!

When I was a little girl, I used to be punished for the excessive tenderness of heart that made me scream and stamp my feet in the street whenever I saw a horse that was being beaten or a lost dog. For the same reason, I was forbidden the delights of the fair and the circus, for, the moment a well-trained animal appeared, I would utter shrill cries at the thought of the blows which it must have endured before arriving at such a stage! In later years, "the Nigger Baby" upset all my theories. Work for him was not a burden but a pleasure. He knew everything without learning anything. The first time that I held a hoop in front of him, he

hurled himself through it with comical eagerness and then, turning about, once more flung himself through the circle, with his eyes starting from his head, his ears flapping and his tongue hanging out of his mouth.

Raymond may have been the son or grandson of a performing dog. Why should not dogs, as well as men, be subject to hereditary influences? Be this as it may, his was a striking personality; and his originality was encouraged until it led to his undoing.

2

I can still see the poor dog as he was on the glorious day that was to seal his fate.

It was in the country, on a holiday. The village children had been promised a performance by Raymond the ring-master. The lawn in front of our house represented the arena. Some neighbours' children had surrounded it with stakes, which were connected by a cord and surmounted with paper flags. The day was fine; the sun was shining; the happy countryside was alive with song and laughter. Because of a distribution of prizes which had taken place that afternoon, the

company was rather late in assembling. It was five o'clock when the school-children, all clad in their Sunday best, arrived two by two, their faces flushed beneath the green of their wreaths, a green which clashed with the tender tones of the meadows.

A big table was laid, covered with cakes, fruits and sweets. The little girls and boys soon forgot the stiffness born of their unaccustomed clothes and the pompous wreaths upon their heads. They danced, played games and sang; but above all they waited! They were waiting for the wonderful dog of whom the whole neighbourhood was talking.

Here he comes! Joyful, frisking with impatience, as though understanding the little triumph in store for him, he rushes to the basket, in the centre of the ring, where his toys are collected, together with his dresses and the hoops employed in his performances.

Then, at this solemn moment, a comical incident intervenes. A little girl, enchanted by the mere appearance of the congenial performer, throws at him the laurel-crown that girds her well-greased locks. Imprudent child, she little knows the facetious bent of our little friend! He moves towards the

object which takes him by surprise, walks round it, inspects it gravely and, to express the infallible soundness of his judgment, lifts a saucy and irreverent paw.

Amid laughter and applause the performance begins. Raymond surpasses himself ; by turns a clown, a gymnast, a ring-master, or an indefatigable comic baby, he amuses and astonishes his audience. His natural ardour imparts to all that he does a charming and surprising grace ; but, as always when outsiders are present, a sort of frenzy possesses him. I do my best to calm him and am thankful when the time comes for the last trick, one that amuses him particularly. A hoop is held out to him ; he hangs on to it with his powerful jaws and allows himself to be swung round and round, very quickly, till the momentum acquired extends his little body, just as though he were flying. Everybody stands amazed. But, suddenly, Raymond lets go. A cry escapes from every breast. He lies stretched on the ground, panting. What can have happened ? He has not fallen from any height ; and the soft, springy lawn must have broken the little black demon's fall. I run across to him, feel

him all over, move his legs one after the other ; he does not groan or whimper ; there are no bones broken. The onlookers are reassured ; it can only be an attack of dizziness ; there is no cause for alarm.

3

Alas, from that day poor Raymond was never the same again ! He had lost his sprightly ways ; he would drag himself painfully along the walks in the garden ; and, the the moment he attempted to run, he checked himself suddenly, as though held back by some malign force.

How far away were all his delights ! When he caught sight of his basket, he would go up to it and seemed to sniff regretfully at his ball, his trapeze and his pretty costumes. He no longer cared to be dressed up ; he was happiest in my arms ; and I used to rock him to and fro, while his great, loving eyes besought me to rid him of his evil spell.

Dogs cannot understand the helplessness of their gods, who are unable to give them relief ; and, if their little minds were capable of receiving a gleam of light, they would cease

to attribute to us a power which is only built up of their own servility.

Directly we returned to Paris, I took Raymond to a veterinary surgeon. He had a lesion of the heart. Every attempt would be made to save him. I had to deceive his fond affection in order to leave him in a stranger's hands.

Next day, I was told of the grief which he had displayed. But it was essential that he should be kept under observation. I went to see him. After I had called twice, his physician asked me not to come any more. The little creature felt too much joy at seeing me, too much sorrow at parting from me ; his malady was aggravated by each visit.

Soon I heard that he was refusing his food and that there was nothing for it but to give him a dose that would set him free. They wanted to apply a little test, in order to measure his failing forces, and asked me to send him one of my frocks. The moment he smelt the stuff on which he had so often fallen asleep, Raymond rose all quivering, wagged his tail, wrinkled his little nose and fell, never again to rise, amid the soft, familiar folds.



CHAPTER III

ACHILLE THE IMPULSIVE

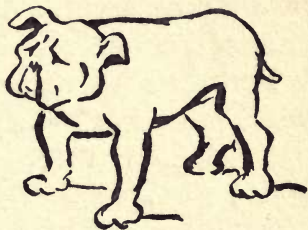


CHAPTER III

ACHILLE THE IMPULSIVE

I

I MOURNED my dog. They told me, as people do, that I should soon find another as lovable, but I would not allow this and persisted in regretting my "Nigger Baby." It was then that a friend who was going away entrusted her dog to me for a period of some months. I accepted, never suspecting the scenes of comic tragedy with which this creature would punctuate my life.



ACHILLE THE IMPULSIVE.

He had a kindly expression, in complete contradiction with the formidable look of his enormous body. He was a Bordeaux mastiff. Heavy, thick-set, with a throat like a

bull's, a wide, square back and a massive, drooping head, he soon proved to be obstinacy incarnate.

As I stood before him, looking a little non-plussed, my friend reassured me :

"Don't be afraid of him," said she. "He has only one fault : he is very timid. My son trained him too severely. I must warn you of a bad habit which he has contracted : the moment you call him at all sharply, he runs away. We have tried changing his name, but it makes no difference, for he is highly intelligent. Always call him gently and he'll obey."

I uttered his name in the tender accents which we employ when calling to a cat :

"Achi . . . ille ! Come, Achi . . . ille, co . . . ome !"

Achille gazed at me with that bored gaze peculiar to mastiffs, his eyelids drooping like curtains on either side of their pupils.

I had lingered so lovingly, so coaxingly, on the last syllable of his name, that there was certainly nothing "impulsive" about it left. The timid animal seemed satisfied, for he came to me and rested his monstrous head upon my knees. Flattered by this prompt

result, I declared that Achille was charming and promised my friend that I would take the greatest care of him.

2

For the first few days, all went well. The mastiff was gentle and quiet as a cat ; and I was amused to find so much amiability hidden beneath so threatening an aspect.

Our misadventures commenced when I began to take him out with me ; and yet I could not always keep him in confinement, a powerful animal simply bursting with health !

One morning, in the country, we were sauntering quietly along the field-paths towards the neighbouring town. I was admiring Achille's good behaviour, though I prudently kept him on the leash. With an absorbed expression, at once grumpy and contented, he ambled beside me at a measured pace ; and in this fashion we had reached the first houses when suddenly I began to be dragged hither and thither, from side to side of the road.

Feeling that I was helpless against this

colossus, I was reflecting upon the best means of getting quickly home, when his sympathies were aroused by a little dog which, at a few yards' distance, was awaiting his master on the front steps of the house. Dragged forward then and there, I stumbled over the steps and fell in the most ludicrous fashion at the feet of the bewildered stranger.

In my fall the leash had slipped from my hand. I picked myself up in a rage and, perceiving the mastiff displaying bear-like graces around the little dog, I launched into space just one cry :

“ Achille ! ”

In that cry exploded all the fury which I had been repressing for the last few moments ; and its vibrations were still echoing from the window-panes of the houses when my Achille, fleeing full tilt, was no more than a grey speck in a cloud of dust.

I am really a little confused at the events that followed. They succeeded one another with a comical absurdity worthy of a cinematograph film. The stranger, touched by my distress, offered to assist me. He straddled his bicycle and was off, while I started to run, trying to explain that, above

all, he must not call the dog roughly. But my voice was lost upon the wind. The stranger's hat blew off ; but he was a man with a sense of duty and did not slacken speed. So we rushed on, he pedalling and I running, while interested spectators began to gather in our wake. Obviously we presented a rather peculiar spectacle. Little street-urchins gleefully joined us. Hearing me cry, "Achille!" they shrieked, in every key :

"*We'll* get your Achille for you !"

We came to a police-station. An over-zealous gendarme stopped the cyclist, taking him for a thief. He was being questioned when I came up. I lauded his gallantry ; and he was released. We resumed our course amidst general hilarity.

At last we approached the mastiff, who, seeing us come from afar, mistrusted our intentions. At that moment, a crowd of working-men emerged from a factory. One of them was accompanied by a poodle carrying a basket. Achille looked him up and down ; and apparently this eminently sociable character inspired him with a sudden dislike, for, just as we were about to fasten him, he

rushed at the poodle and engaged him in battle. Vain attempts were made to wrest the poodle from the mastiff's fearsome jaws. Thereupon, enlightened by recent events, I advanced, restraining my wrath as best I could. My fists were clenched, my voice was hoarse, but I spoke in a tender murmur :

" Achi . . . chille ! My angel ! My love ! Darling Achi . . . ille, come, my pet ! "

No words could express the grotesque pathos of the scene. There were roars of laughter all around me ; and it required real courage on my part to persist until the animal, at last convinced of my good intentions, dropped the poor, bleeding poodle and came to me.

It was some time before I took Achille out again !

3

Not very long after this incident, one of our sporting friends came to call. He was touched by the sight of the mastiff in confinement and offered to take him in hand :

" I undertake to train him in a few hours," he assured me.

He put a training-collar on the mastiff, with a long cord attached to it ; and, after two lessons, he returned in triumph :

“ Achille understood at once ! ” our friend explained. “ He’s a cunning rogue ! ”

Achille was a cunning rogue, though cunning is not exactly a quality which one is inclined to welcome in the canine race. His trainer informed me :

“ Now you can call him as loud as you like and he’ll come.”

I set out for a walk in perfect confidence, avoiding, however, the direction of the town, where kerb-posts, lamp-posts and refuse-heaps offer so many temptations and surprises. Idle precaution ! Achille was well-named ; his was an impetuous, effervescent nature. He was a placid creature in the house, but out of doors everything stimulated and excited him.

Some sheep were grazing in a field. The failing daylight emphasized the outlines of their fat, round backs ; there were very many of them and they stood crowded together in the tall grass, so that one saw neither heads nor legs but only a soft wave of moving wool. This spectacle deeply interested Achille ;

between the heavy curtains of his eyelids I saw his pupils gleaming ; and his quivering attitude seemed to say :

“ If only I could spread panic through that flock ! ”

With one bound he leapt the bank that skirted the road and made for the sheep at a gallop. I called him, sternly, once, twice, thrice ; and at the third call what was my amazement : the great mastiff halted in his tracks ! He was only a few yards from the flock, standing fixed and motionless. His combative ideas appeared suddenly to have evaporated. I congratulated myself greatly when he returned to me ; and we continued on our road.

The victory at last won over Achille's waywardness filled me with delight. It is only fair to say that Achille had valuable domestic qualities ; he was very gentle and very clean and upright in his behaviour ; he never stole anything, for all his greediness. He won our affections ; I dare say also that we were grateful to him for not making an improper use of his terrible strength.

So we strolled peacefully on, each pleased with the other. We entered a wood, cool

and mysterious in the twilight. The moist earth sent forth a pleasant fragrance ; the peace of night was already at hand, lurking under the heavy boughs and the dense leafage. Suddenly, in a clearing, the uneasy form of a doe rose before me and ventured on the path which we were following. In her alarm, she broke into a run ; but her movements were painful ; she had doubtless been wounded by a shot. What a temptation for Achille, with his passionate love of game ! I would have held him back, but that was impossible ! He darted headlong after the poor doe. In vain I called him in tones of desperate authority ; the path made a sudden turn and I hurried forward, fearing to behold a pitiable sight. But what a surprise awaited me ! Once again the mastiff had obeyed me ! There he stood, in the middle of the path, his legs giving under him, terrified and motionless.

Before we returned to the house, a fresh ordeal had confirmed my suspicions. There was no longer any room for doubt ; and suddenly I began to laugh to myself at the cunning of Achille, a cunning of which he himself was the dupe. He had very promptly understood

the threat of the training-collar ; and, believing himself still afflicted with it, he stopped short, in terror, at the precise length of the cord with which he had been trained.

I knew therefore from that moment that any temptation might provoke Achille's ardour with impunity, provided that it did not occur within a distance of thirty feet ; and, by making continual calculations, I was able to enjoy delightful walks in his company.

CHAPTER IV
ADHÉMAR THE MISUNDERSTOOD



CHAPTER IV

ADHÉMAR THE MISUNDERSTOOD

I

I MUST apologize for speaking of a dog who did not fill any place in our lives. The few lines which I shall devote to him are to some extent dictated by remorse. As he was misunderstood, I need say no more.

2

There are dogs with whom we are not in sympathy. They possess qualities which we overlook ; and we are unjust to them without knowing it. Is this on account of some unrealized truth, or is it rather the secret work of a thousand little unseen facts that throw a dance of light and shade over our least opinions and especially over those to which we do not pay much attention ?

Be this as it may, I have often heard

Maeterlinck say of some passing dog, "What a scamp he looks!" or, "That dog has a commonplace mind," or again, "There's a dog with vulgar feelings."

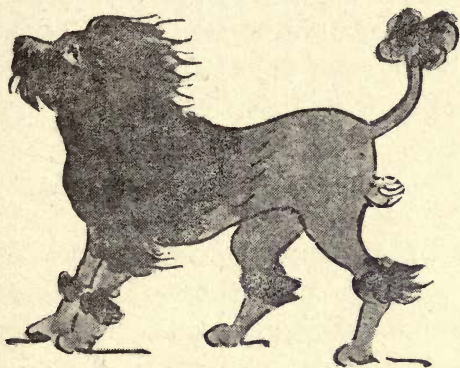
None of all this could be said of the unfortunate Adhémar; but he was instantly described as "crazy," "incoherent" and "unsettled." And these insults were the more serious inasmuch as they were addressed to a poodle!

The poodle, as we know, enjoys an undying reputation for intelligence and faithfulness. We were thus confronted with a disturbing problem. Could canine reputations be as ill-founded as are often the good and evil fame of human beings?

In the matter of intelligence there was no doubt whatever: Adhémar was stupid; he understood nothing. The most elementary principles of social life were foreign to him; it was hopeless to look to him for any sort of cleanliness or good behaviour. Feverish and intensely eager, he would rush wildly into the flower-beds, smashing the roses and overturning the flower-vases without paying the slightest heed to the crimes which he was committing. He was a handsome, graceful,

dishevelled-looking creature ; and his air of a poet of the eighteen-thirties had earned him a romantic-sounding name. His silky, wavy hair wrapped him in a long, warm-brown cloak.

Despite his physical advantages, we did



ADHÉMAR THE MISUNDERSTOOD.

His air of a poet of the eighteen-thirties had earned him
a romantic-sounding name.

not take to him. He struck us as stupid, indifferent and even devoid of heart. We never witnessed its brief appearance ; and his whole story lies in his melancholy death.

Adhémar never had a chance. Since we dominate the world of dogs from the lofty heights of our judgment, one would think

that we should find it easy to analyse the causes of their various fortunes. But no, I can throw no light upon the obscure destiny of this unhappy poodle. Once again I must draw a comic comparison between the life of the canine species and the life of the human race, whose machinery, being subject to the influence of an infinite number of causes that inevitably escape us, often bears no relation to our actions and desires.

3

We took Adh  mar to the country with us, in the radiant springtime. In the autumn a neighbour offered to look after him until the following summer.

We were not fond of him ; and he did not seem to be attached to us. We set out for the south.

A fortnight later, we heard that Adh  mar had deliberately starved himself to death.

He had been misunderstood !

CHAPTER V
GASTON THE HIGHWAYMAN AND
DELPHINE



CHAPTER V

GASTON THE HIGHWAYMAN AND DELPHINE ; OR, THE MATERNAL VOCATION

I

IN telling this history I must combine the fate of two dogs of entirely opposite natures. Love, which brought them together, changed the whole course of their lives.

We were then living in what was once the rectory at Gruchet-Saint-Siméon, in Normandy. The tiny garden, all crammed with flowers, surrounded the little house, which seemed to rise from a bed of sweet-scented blossom. At the back of the house, under a mantle of ivy and climbing nasturtium, was the kitchen, a smiling, sparkling kitchen, truly Flemish in its neatness. Outside the kitchen was a yard boasting a well, a wash-house and a dog-kennel, which remained

untenanted, for so far our companions, invariably treated as pets and not too large, had always lived with us indoors.



GASTON THE HIGHWAYMAN.

At the time when my tale begins, I had lost Raymond ; Achille had gone back to his owner ; Adhémar was dead ; and Maeterlinck had lately buried in the kitchen-garden

a little dog who had died in the flower of his youth and over whom he had pronounced a beautiful funeral oration.¹

2

It was a fine morning in July. We were reading in the shade of a thicket of hazel-bushes, when Bamboula, the cook, suddenly made her appearance at the end of a little alley bordered with dwarf box-hedges. The incident which had brought her into the garden was obviously serious, to judge by the unusual pose of her red turban and the bewilderment depicted on her black face. The negress was gesticulating with her short fat arms ; and her barbarous language was more absurd than ever :

“ Missie ! Missie ! Come see dog stop in kennel ! ”

For some days Bamboula had been informing us that, whenever she first entered the

¹ This was Pelléas, the little French bull-dog, whose story was told by Maeterlinck in his essay “On the Death of a Little Dog,” included in *The Double Garden* and published in a separate volume under the title, in England, of *My Dog* (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.) and, in the United States, of *Our Friend the Dog* (Dodd, Mead, & Co., Inc.).—A. T. de M.

kitchen in the morning, a dog was occupying the deserted kennel. Despite his very valuable collar, he had not a prosperous appearance ; he was thin. She would give him some bread, after which he used at once to leap over the wall of the little yard and vanish across country.

Hitherto we had listened inattentively to the negress' tale, for she was blessed with a vivid imagination ; but now, all of a sudden, the adventure seemed to be genuine. I ran to the back of the house. The vagabond was there, solemnly seated in front of the kennel, like a householder on his threshold. I was struck by his intelligent eyes and his original expression. Evidently this was a personage ! I looked at his collar ; it was really valuable : a heavy silver curb with a clasp set with turquoises. The dog gave me a friendly welcome ; and I must observe that he had a naturally haughty bearing which added no little value to his amiability. He was not the sort of fellow that would always be easy to get on with !

A strong, tall, handsome creature, well-shaped, though his breed was not pure : he was a cross between a Great Dane and a

sleughi, black all over, with long, bright eyes, full of trickery and audacity, and one white patch on the tip of his nose. He held his ears in a peculiar fashion, one pricked up and the other hanging, which gave him a comical, roguish air.

The strange manner of his arrival, this way of planting himself upon us, of choosing his masters, his handsome collar, which bore no address, and his very expression, which was at once proud and fierce, all contributed to make him interesting.

We decided to keep him. Bamboula, whose neck and arms were covered with amulets, declared that this dog must be a fetish ; and she gave him a royal feast.

The day passed uneventfully. After making a good dinner, the stranger went to sleep in the sun outside the kennel ; he seemed overcome with fatigue. As he lay there, forlorn but trusting, he looked the picture of a poor traveller who has at last found a haven.

What a mistake ! The mysterious animal was soon to convince us of his vagabond character.

When the twilight came, I went into the little yard to tie up our new guest. The

mist was hanging in diaphanous clouds from the branches of the apple-trees ; colours were becoming veiled in the grey of evening ; the distant call of the peasants driving their beasts home sounded nearer than usual in the damp air.

“ It will be a cold night,” I said to myself. “ We must have some more straw put in the kennel.”

And I had already called the servant, when I stopped in amazement : the dog was no longer there !

The negress appeared on the kitchen-steps. She had seen nothing, heard nothing ; only a few minutes earlier she had awakened him to give him his slops. The dish was empty ; the dog had quietly departed after his supper.

3

The incident aroused our curiosity. Maeterlinck declared himself openly hostile. He worships dogs ; he has always had dogs about him ; but he likes the conventional dog, submissive and dutiful, looking to his master for everything. I spoke in vain in defence of canine liberty :

“Why should you wish everything to be subservient to our human life?” I asked. “Is it really so perfect that other things must be blindly adapted to it? Ought we not to respect this dog for wishing to escape the yoke of men? Why accuse him of a crime when he is doing nobody any harm? I expect the poor creature has fallen in with brutes who beat him; and, instead of submitting, he fled.”

It was put to me, very sagely, in reply that this sort of thing could not last and that this free-thinking dog must be the victim of his own errors.

It is only too true! Dogs, the dear things, have long ago lost their right to independence! O foolish creatures, who, for your love of man, have denied your ancestors! You have left the vast forests, the deep caverns, the fair, untilled spaces, for tidy gardens and comfortable drawing-rooms. Poor wretches that you are! Society had but to cast its stupid, pitiless drag-net over you and the thing was done! Since that time you have shared the laws and customs of mankind.

My curiosity was aroused by this most

attractive vagabond. He puzzled and interested me. His independence no doubt would remove him from the immediate sphere of my affections ; but how it delighted me !

There were two parties in the house. The old man-servant kept repeating, with a shake of his solemn head :

“ A dog who won't put up with a master, he's like a man without religion. He's no good.”

But the negress was on my side ; and, as she was the mistress of the little courtyard and the keeper of the victuals, we hoped between us to lure back our visitor.

Bamboula, dreaming and idle, used to spend her time sitting on the steps of her kitchen. She would pass whole days in shelling beans, with a wise deliberation, dropping them into her apron, which made a wide hollow between her knees ; or, equipped with little wooden implements, she would carve or stamp vegetables destined to adorn the soup. Her chief delight was her gaudy attire ; she was for ever changing the turban which encircled her head, or the gaily-coloured shawls which she piled one on top of the other around her neck. Above all, she loved necklaces made

of gilt beads and long ear-rings loaded with imitation stones ; and, when I asked her for whom she took such pains, she would answer, nodding her big black face :

“ For God’s little birds ! ”

It was a fact that, in spite of her ripe years and her unseemly bulk, she was still hoping to find a husband. At twenty she had been very much in love with a white man who figured in all her stories, a flighty person unworthy of esteem. He had promptly deserted her, but she always spoke of him with regret and took pleasure in relating her bygone joys and sorrows.

On the evening of the dog’s disappearance, as old François, our tenant-farmer, was deploring the animal’s misbehaviour, Bamboula cried, with a sigh full of indulgence :

“ Dog just like my Gaston ! ”

To please her, I promised her that the dog, if we succeeded in keeping him, should be called Gaston. She at once declared that she would go to Mass at daybreak next morning, to pray for the vagabond’s return. Then she added astutely, with a wink :

“ After church me put grand dinner in front kennel ! ”

She was a simple soul, but no fool ; and her common sense considered it safer not to leave all the work to God.

Gaston came back next day.

4

But it may be interesting to learn something of the life of an independent dog. Let us follow the fickle Gaston for a while.

At seven o'clock in the evening, we find him ambling confidently along the misty highway. He makes no stops ; but, for that matter, the country-side offers few attractions. From time to time, perhaps, as he passes a farmhouse or a cottage, an alluring fragrance entices his averted nostrils. With incorruptible nose and eyes that refuse to wander, he journeys on, disdaining temptation ; and the metronome of his wiry tail seems to time his even footsteps.

On a sloping bank, a lamb which has broken its tether is calling vainly for its mother. The dog quivers ; a tremor of desire passes through his sinewy loins. How good it would be to leap upon the creature and strangle it ! More than once has he entered a sheep-fold :

what red-letter days were those ! Poultry-runs also offer glowing delights ; on the other hand, throttling fowls is such easy work ! While making these reflections, the dog continues on his way. He has no time to spare. Dogs possess an instinctive timepiece which never misleads them. Has Gaston the Emancipated created duties for himself ?

Do we not know that liberty is an illusion and that our heaviest chains are those which we ourselves forge ?

Gaston has renounced social life and the duties which it involves, but he is not free, for his instincts lead him and he is a creature of fierce passions. He is the son and grandson of sleughis ; and those Arab dogs are accustomed to theft and deceit. The ways of the desert are in his blood : he is proud and mean at the same time, amiable and knavish, brave and cowardly. Oh, his type is rare enough in the canine world ; and any right-thinking dog should turn from him with indignation ! One or two, it may be, would envy him in their secret hearts, for good breeding is not without its hypocrisies ; but none, I am certain, would consent to own him as a kinsman !

Our vagabond has now travelled some distance from the village where we live. He has met a few passers-by. They do not care about him, they look at him askance. Here comes the rector, fat, short of breath, purple in the face ; that quick glance of his, under his heavy eyelids, takes in everything, while appearing to see nothing. He threatens Gaston as the dog passes him :

“ You, if I catch you one of these days, you'll get a famous thrashing ! ”

He stoops to pick up a stone, but his great stomach hampers his movements ; and, when he straightens himself with difficulty, the dog is already far away.

He meets the mayor, his enemy ; the schoolmaster, who has sworn to have his life ; and then a band of small boys, who give chase to him. At last he reaches his goal, a little village a mile and a quarter from our house.

Visions of delight fill his hazy mind ; intoxicating odours hang on the surrounding air ; it is the sacred hour of the evening meal. There is not a soul in the square. Silence reigns ; one or two outcast dogs are openly and honestly rummaging the refuse-heaps.

Gaston, to whom humility is a stranger, entertains different ambitions. He conceals himself in a doorway whence he is able to survey the smiling approach to a pork-butcher's shop. The shop is empty ; a little wooden wicket, surmounted by a bell, bars the entrance ; the pork-butcher and his family have retired to the back-room to eat their dinner. It is a matter, therefore, of jumping



One or two outcast dogs.



Too much afraid of him to treat him other than politely.

the wicket without shaking the bell. This is nothing to Gaston, but he must not be seen ! A few of the village dogs come up to pay him their respects ; they are too much afraid of him to treat him other than politely. He makes an indifferent response to their deference and moves away, as though uncertain of their discretion.

The calm of the evening gathers the slightest sounds. Everything has a voice ;

such faint noises as a passing breath of air, a flutter of wings, a whisper from the trees, are like so many blows to the sleughi's uneasy ears ; and he dare not stir.

But suddenly, in the distance, a long, plaintive howl rends the silence. Nothing can delay Gaston now : you will soon know why. He bounds towards the string of sausages that festoons the doorway of the shop, seizes two, three of them and falls upon a ham, which he grips by the knuckle-bone ; then, intoxicated with the joy of thieving, he clears the wicket at a single bound. . . . But oh, misfortune ! Something tugs at his jaws, the string of sausages gets caught and a shrill bell tinkles, more tragic to Gaston than a funeral knell ! The hour of his destiny has struck ! Alas, he has to abandon his treasures ! He flees ; and the alarm is given :

“Stop thief ! Stop thief !” cries the pork-butcher, running out.

From all the shops emerge excited families. Glass in hand, their mouths full, their napkins tied about their necks, they shout questions and answers from door to door :

“It's the dog ! It's that thief of a dog !

. . . He was seen this time ! . . . This'll be the end of him ! . . . It's a month now since he's been robbing us ! . . . It's a good job they caught him at it ! ”

They forget their food ; they laugh ; they chatter excitedly ; and everybody repairs to the far end of the square, to gaze down the road by which the dog has escaped, followed by the pork-butcher and a regiment of boys.

Night has almost fallen ; but they can see moving shadows, running shapes and yonder, by the common, a group of figures forming a black mass. It moves this way. Distant voices, shouts and exclamations escape from it ; and little by little the clamour becomes articulate. It is a song of triumph : the thief has been arrested !

A moment later, they are congratulating the rural policeman. He comes up leading the unhappy Gaston, firmly chained ; and the offender is led away to prison.

5

Next day, the mayor of the village came to call on us. A petition had been signed by all the inhabitants. They demanded the

dog's deportation, failing which the policeman threatened to rid the parish of his presence. Gaston was promptly condemned by Maeterlinck, who did not care twopence about the brigand ; but the rustics were not satisfied. One of them claimed damages for a slaughtered goat ; another alleged the sudden death of a rabbit ; next, the grocer had lost some tins of sardines from his shop, while the butcher and, last but not least, the pork-butcher complained of frequent and incredible robberies. An enquiry was instituted.

It was then that I learnt something more of the life of this singular dog. In accordance with eastern custom, he had a harem of lady friends. The strangest part of the affair is that he committed theft after theft on their behalf. Scraps of grease-spotted paper were found in the cobbler's dog-kennel ; ham-bones in the shed where the mayor's Great Dane slept at night ; and strings of sausages, duly identified by the pork-butcher, in a kennel elsewhere. There was no doubt about it : Gaston, the lean and gaunt, used to play the highwayman on behalf of his lady-loves !

6

One of them inspired him with the purest and most ideal affection. Picture a collie, standing fairly tall, slender and beautiful. On her immaculate white coat were brown patches which formed harmonious shadings and marked her pure forehead with symmetrical bars. Her long crisped ears framed her face in close curls ; and her thick fleecy coat stood out from her body, layer upon layer, with the airy grace of numberless flounces. The "feathers" of her paws were like lace ruffles ; her chest was adorned with a snowy frill ; her eyes were trusting and affectionate. The corners of her mouth were slightly raised, giving her a melancholy smile.



DELPHINE RAPT IN
MEDITATION.

I will not divulge her real name, but will call her Delphine, for she was like one of Balzac's heroines, with the same style and the same romantic character.

I found her surrounded by her six children,

all well shot up, handsome, silky and as thorough-bred as the mother.

The woman in charge of them told me this touching story : Delphine's owners had left the country suddenly. They had entrusted the dog to a poor neighbour, leaving her some money to buy food with ; but, before very long, six little ones came into the world. What was to be done ? The owners were written to, but in vain.

Delphine was wasting with the effort to nourish her offspring. It was then that the woman one evening saw " the great black devil," as she called him, arrive upon the scene. At first, in alarm, she tried to drive him away ; then, reassured by his gentle manners, she began to watch him and soon came to look upon him with artless admiration.

" A providence, my dear lady ! " said the old woman, who was greatly upset by the news of Gaston's arrest. " But for him, the poor creature would have died ! Every day he brought her meat ; then he would lick the little ones, giving them every care and attention and warming them whenever the night was cold ! "

No one had dared to destroy the puppies, for Delphine would have all but died of grief. She lived only for motherhood.

When she found herself alone, after rearing her first babies, she fell into a deep melancholy. What is more—and how shall we explain so strange a phenomenon?—it was soon seen that she was exhibiting all the symptoms of phantom pregnancy. The veterinary surgeons drove in from thirty miles around to observe this extraordinary case. Delphine, heavy and languid as she was, seemed happy ; but, when the due time had elapsed without bringing her what she was expecting, her heart—there is no other word for it—her mother's heart was so sad that those who saw her feared for her life. Then it was that for the second time Delphine gave proof of her imagination.

One morning, melancholy as ever, she was mournfully watching the games of some children frolicking in a yard. The untouched meal by her side was growing cold, when suddenly she caught sight of a little plush dog, which one of the girls had left lying on the ground. She went up to it inquisitively and, after tenderly licking it all over,

carried it carefully to the back of her kennel. From that day onward her health improved. She adopted the plaything with such passionate affection that, if any one pretended to take it from her, she gave way to anger. She lavished the most touching care upon it; and for months she lulled the promptings of her heart with this mock offspring.

I promised the old woman to secure the future of Delphine's interesting family; and in order to find a home for Gaston I entered into correspondence with some well-to-do people at Dieppe. I felt for him that slightly guilty sympathy which women bestow upon certain highwaymen, as though, behind their crimes, they perceived a heart less readily satisfied than the hearts of ordinary men and a soul too generous to yield to the narrow hypocrisy of good behaviour. The people promised to make him happy.

7

A year later I met Gaston again. He had lost flesh, had grown old and was looking pale: you must accept the word in a purely

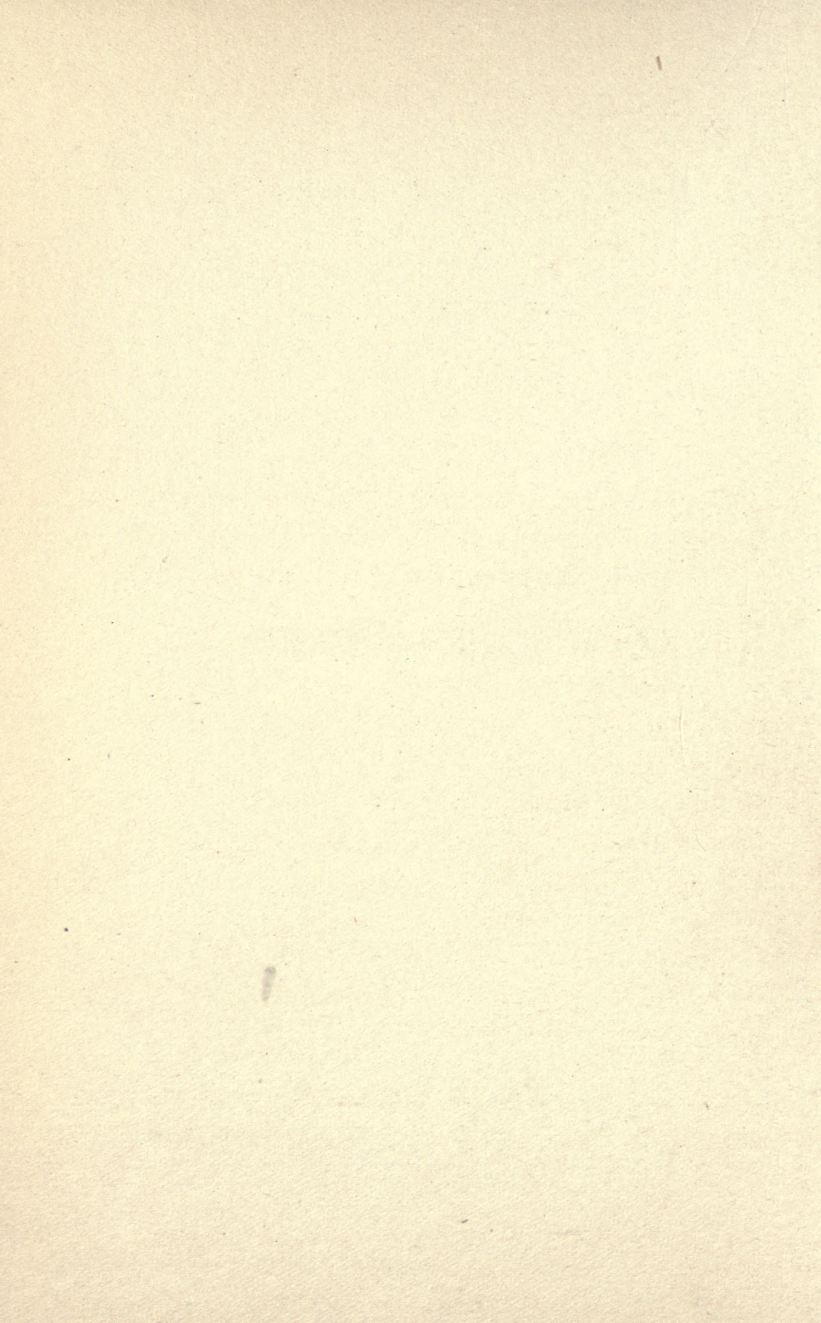
symbolical sense, though my love for animals has accustomed me to notice their looks despite their mask of hair or fur.

The poor fellow was leading the life of a galley-slave in the service of a peripatetic fishmonger, who beat him unmercifully. From morn to night he dragged a barrow through the villages. He died, not long after, of grief and privation. Gaston, in short, had fallen a victim to those irresistible laws which punish our errors with such terrible severity.

It is to be presumed that dogs, like men, have need of morality and that wisdom is a necessity of nature, since it alone can establish the equilibrium which results in peace.

For the dog, wisdom resides in his obedience to his master. Our human wisdom is more subtle and is able, like our gods, to assume many contradictory forms.

CHAPTER VI
GOLAUD THE SUPERDOG



CHAPTER VI

GOLAUD THE SUPERDOG

I

GOLAUD is a mongrel bull-dog, which is equivalent in the canine world to being without caste ; but he is too proud to care what people think of him. He is a serious dog ; he is sure of himself ; he has weighed everything and formed his own conclusions. If he could speak he would preach. From that pugilistic-looking mouth of his, wise maxims would come forth, together with lectures as wearisome as they would no doubt be appropriate.



GOLAUD THE SUPERDOG.

He has none of the hideous beauties that constitute the value of his kind. His teeth

do not stick out from his jaws ; his eyes do not start out of his head ; his short tail has no bends and corners to it ; his legs are straight. For these reasons he is scorned by the judges, but unanimously admired by the crowd. Moderation being the secret of distinction, one is thankful for his attenuation of type. Besides, if the truth be told, is not the perfection of the bull-dog race due to a system of grotesque torture during the first weeks of the puppy's existence ? And is this not bound to react upon the mind ?

Most people think Golaud charming. His rather loose, khaki-coloured coat gives him an English appearance, while his black mask and his Arab eyes, so gentle and intelligent, add a final attraction to his personality.

But how did Golaud come to earn his title of Superdog ?

It is obvious that he will leave no work to canine posterity, no immortal words, nor even an heroic action, such as many of his fellows have performed. Nor could I honestly award him a Monthyon prize, for he was not so excessively virtuous. But he surpassed other dogs by possessing greater humanity. His

character underwent unexpected changes ; it developed ; it adopted varying moral philosophies. And is it not something, is it not indeed much, that we can speak of his "character" without smiling ? He did not love us as a dog loves, without knowing why ; his love was free from sordidness or servility ; his hatreds and his passions were always noble.

Here I pause, lest I be accused of partiality. I would not wish to be influenced by the charm of his great, bewitching eyes, which for fifteen years have gazed at me with an unchanging love. Moreover, when it comes to boasting of his perfections, I feel a certain embarrassment. The actions of a sage do not make a strident appeal for admiration. Rather are they concealed from the general gaze and very often of a negative nature.

I shall try to reveal Golaud's wisdom by telling the story of his modest and contemplative life.

2

His beginnings were very humble. One Sunday, Golaud stood at the corner of one of the main Paris thoroughfares, resignedly

awaiting his destiny. Beside him stood a man of an ill-favoured countenance.

"A hundred francs!" said the man to everybody that passed. "A hundred francs!"

People looked at him, but not one stopped. Night was approaching. It was in the winter. The passers-by became more and more infrequent; the chances of a profitable deal decreased. The man was growing uneasy. All day long he had dragged the dog through the streets of Paris, hiding anxiously in the doorways and darting forward and whispering whenever he perceived a likely buyer:

"A hundred francs!" he persistently repeated. "A hundred francs! It's giving him away!"

Maeterlinck saw the dog in passing and was won by the look in his eyes:

"I'll give you two louis," he said.

"Take him, quick!" replied the man.

Did his haste confess a theft? Maeterlinck hesitated; but the poor dog's eyes pleaded so longingly! He asked for a piece of string, hailed a cab and entered it with his new companion. The dog sat down, filled with respect and anticipatory gratitude, as

though he foresaw the magnificent existence which he was about to lead. He displayed no uneasiness, no servility either, nor any frivolity ; he gazed at his master with the expression peculiar to bull-dogs, an air at once melancholy and assiduous.

This was fifteen years ago, before there were taxis in Paris. The two companions drove across the town in a closed cab. Their fortuitous union was to last for many a long year. Meanwhile they travelled at a leisurely pace, the gentle trot of an elderly horse. What did they say to each other ? I was never told ; but I know that, when I came home an hour later, I found a note on the hall-table saying :

“ There is a harmless dog in the dressing-room.”

Maeterlinck had scribbled this in pencil on an odd scrap of paper ; and the word “ harmless,” *inoffensif*, was so badly written that I took it for the name of some Russian breed of hound and felt anything but reassured.

With the greatest caution I opened the door of the room containing the dog. He was sleeping quietly in front of the fire. At my approach he rose, came towards me, stagger-

ing on his clumsy feet, and stopped to look at me, without betraying any other feeling than a solemn curiosity. I was won over there and then. He followed me into the



dining-room and shared my meal ; a little later he asked me to open the door. His general bearing inspired such confidence that it was impossible to refuse him anything. He returned to me at once ; and his intelligent eyes seemed to say :

His intelligent eyes seemed to say :
"From you I expect a bed on which I may rest while I wait for 'the Master.'"

"I am very tired ; my heart is full of a love which I have not yet been able to devote to mankind, for men have treated me so badly ; from you I expect a bed on which I may rest while I wait for 'the Master.'"

3

In all ages we have been accustomed to exhibit celebrated persons much as a two-headed calf or a three-legged fowl is ex-

hibited at a fair. After they are dead, dreary statues, set up in the squares of our great cities, represent them clad in frock-coats, with their head bowed upon one hand, or with a forefinger peremptorily uplifted. They are generally mounted upon a cube of granite adorned with bas-reliefs, which immortalize their work and the implements with which it was accomplished. The biographies compiled about them give us only the external facts of their lives. At such and such a date they lived in this or that place or visited this or that country. Why? And how? And what were their thoughts, their joys, their desires? What were their personal habits, their weaknesses, or their faults? What, in a word, was the quality of their humanity? It does not seem to matter to the biographer! Here and there some action is recorded, if it be sufficiently striking. Readers like to imagine that these heroes do not eat and drink, that they are not live men. They are allowed to sleep, because sleeping is poetical, and to love, because loving is romantic: but, good God, with what a love! Immortal, immutable, impeccable, single-minded, spotlessly pure,

immobile as a statue and orderly as a well-constructed literary work ! I shall never forget the embarrassment of a dear old lady who, in her youth, had been a very close friend of Renan's. When I asked her what he was like in this intimacy, she coughed, cleared her throat, took off her spectacles, shrugged her shoulders and at last replied, apologetically :

“ He was like anybody else.”

The celebrity, as usually represented in novels or on the stage, is a hateful bore. In real life, a sort of crafty conspiracy keeps up three legends about him : one magnificent, one absurd, the third sordid. The last inevitably originates from the first.

No sooner is the celebrity handed over to him than the biographer sets to work taxidermist-fashion. He first flays his subject, then stuffs the skin, gluing and stitching it, painting and stiffening it, rounding its contours and finally perching the whole thing on a stand. There you have the marvel ready to face eternity !

But I will not insist any further upon this matter, which is keeping us from my friend Golaud. I merely felt obliged to take certain

precautions before recording the solemn revelations which I am about to make.

“My friend,” said I, “are you asking me where your master is? Indeed I do not know, for a terrible disaster has occurred to-day, a culinary disaster! Learn, to begin with, that your master is a philosopher, but that there is no system of morals or principles that teaches man to retain his peace of mind in the face of a burnt sirloin. Your future master, justly enraged, has left the house; and I shall never understand with what magnetic power your gaze was endowed, to arouse him from so dismal a meditation. You will worship your master, not for the virtues he possesses, but because he is punctual in his ways and dislikes travelling. You will learn that philosophy runs through the mind of man like a golden network. Its beautiful meshes capture the big things but let the little ones slip through. And it is among the little things that your relations with him will take form and being.”

4

At that time we were living at Passy, in a house with a patrician air, standing in an

old, terraced garden. At one end of the house a few steps led to a little lodge which Maeterlinck had fitted as his study. Here were white walls hung with engravings, a great table heaped with books and the veriest minimum of chairs, for visitors were not encouraged. On the floor were more books, dictionaries, newspapers and reviews, all lying in a disorder that constituted a kind of order, for it never varied. Two windows opened upon a disused balcony, covered with creepers and climbing plants. On the mantelpiece and a number of shelves were red-painted pots containing a host of queer, hairy, or aggressively spiky objects, dusty and dry but clinging obstinately to life. These were the cacti, for which Maeterlinck had an affection.

Here, on the morrow of his arrival, the new dog, christened Golaud, was to undergo the great and supreme ordeal, which consists in behaving well while the master is at work.

Do not imagine that this is an easy thing for a dog to do! He must not snore too loudly, nor scratch himself too vigorously, nor move about too much. Golaud passed

the ordeal magnificently, but in a manner peculiar to himself. Absorbed in solemn contemplation, he seemed utterly oblivious of sleep, fleas, or the chances of amusement. Seated beside his master, he gazed at him as he wrote, seeking in vain for the explanation of an action which he had never before observed and of which he failed to see the attraction.

After several mornings spent in observation, Golaud resigned himself to slumber. He had certainly not solved this first enigma, but he was full of respect for the gods and their strange devices.

5

We soon declared that Golaud was perfect, for he satisfied our egoism completely. As he was never troublesome or in the way, we spoke of his tact and his good breeding! Did he not understand exactly when he was wanted and when not? Was he not always well-behaved, quiet, clean, sensible, unaffectedly amiable, independent as a cat and yet faithful to his duties as a dog? We discovered no fault in him. His comprehension of human life was surprising.

There is an old saying that perfection is not of this world. Friend Golaud, you often made me think that it exists, but that it cannot linger with us, for it has no abiding-place upon this earth of ours ; we do not recognize it, we disguise it, we suspect it, or drive it away ; and, if it persists, we kill it.

Golaud's countenance spoke of self-assurance and self-contemplation. These blind forces, both perfectly hateful in man, are charmingly comical on the face of a dog. They make us attribute to him all sorts of judgments, ideas, memories and intentions, in short, quite a little brain-machine, like that of which we are so proud.

"He makes me feel uncomfortable, with that profound look of disillusionment on his face," Maeterlinck would say, after he had finished working.

As for me, I gave up singing in Golaud's presence, for he used to stare at me with an uneasy expression, as though my sudden madness alarmed him :

"What has come over her ? " he seemed to ask. "Is she ill ? And he, is he crazy ? What is this mania for scratching paper

for hours at a time, when he is free to stroll about or eat all day ? ”

Golaud certainly loved us, but did not altogether approve of us.

6

We entrusted the man-servant with the duty of taking Golaud out. The servant in question was a cowherd, transformed into a butler. Artistic people, so the Philistines will tell you, are given to making these reprehensible blunders. And the Philistines are right, for they know the difficult secrets of practical life better than we do ; they have a way of making it fit in with their views ; they enjoy every moment of it.

François was a bit of a visionary. Like his patron saint, he loved all animals. He was once seen upon his knees, in the middle of a green meadow flooded by the rays of the rising sun, begging pardon of his cow, whom he had been beating. On another occasion, as he watched a stag-beetle flying up to the sky, he said to me :

“ That is what I feel like on Sundays in church.”

I taught him to read. Overcome with amazement, he said, by way of thanks :

“ I now have monuments in my head ! ”

Thereupon he was washed, dressed and shod and felt so light that he was afraid lest he should be wafted away in the air. He accompanied us to Paris.

We used to take him with us in the motor-car ; it was his business to keep an eye on it. After leaving him for a moment, while we paid a visit, on coming out of the house we found him with a crowd round him ; he was red in the face and tearful, with his hair rumpled and his cap over one ear. He was quarrelling with a chauffeur :

“ He asks me,” he shouted, in his Norman dialect, “ how many horses my carriage has ! He can see for himself that it’s a machine ; but, because I’m a peasant, he goes pulling my leg ! ”

It was to this embryonic brain that we entrusted the task of exercising Golaud ; but we soon learnt that Golaud, who was sharper than he, used to leave him at the first street-corner and make arrangements to find him again when it was time to go home.

We discovered this, thanks to a melancholy

incident. One evening, the dog did not return. We questioned François, who of course knew nothing. A day went by, two days, three days ; and presently a week had elapsed and we abandoned all hope. Golaud, trusting too far to the goodness of human beings, had no doubt been picked up as a stray dog. Every one mourned his loss ; his virtues were already beginning to shine with incomparable splendour in the light of memory.

One morning, ten days later, as I was looking out of a window on the street, in the middle of the road I saw a yellow ball, which seemed to be rolling with a zigzag course. The ball grew larger ; it was supported by four unsteady legs ; soon I distinguished a black patch ! I was no longer in doubt : it was Golaud ! I rushed into the street ; I ran towards him ; he was hurt and had hardly the strength to move. He stopped short at the sight of me ; his stump of a tail wagged with joy ; and, exhausted, he fell at my feet.

For weeks we fought for his life. A hideous wound in his throat enabled us to picture his adventures.

A great butcher's hook had pierced his flesh. He had escaped in a half-dying condition. But where had he been and for how many days had he dragged himself along in order to come back to us ?

We indulged in a thousand theories, all of which gave us a high opinion of his fidelity and greatly increased the love which we bore him.

7

After living with us for some months, Golaud, thanks to his sincerity and his trust in all human beings, had earned the nickname of "Monsieur Poire." It was evident, moreover, that he was making great efforts to become man. Ever assiduous, anxious and observant, he had invented three cries whereby to express at least the chief emotions of a sensitive soul: grief, boredom, and joy. With the aid of this language, he was able to express his understanding of anything that interested him. When a walk was announced, he would frisk about with glee; and he would groan dismally if the fair promise were withdrawn. It astonished us so much that we often repeated the experi-

ment to make sure. Needless to say, this model dog never deserved a punishment. He was capable at most of committing mistakes ; and, if reproached for these in terms of too great severity, his contrite expression and look of misery filled us with pity, so that we would apologize at once.

But, when I come to narrate the chief events of his life, his strong personality prevents me. He rises before me like a judge ; and his reproving countenance intimidates me. I feel that he is protesting, that if he could express himself he would address me in some such terms as these :

“ O presumptuous mistress, absorbed in your own occupations and emotions, can you honestly speak of mine without misrepresenting me ? Speak, I give my consent ; but be my interpreter ! Consider your own life through the medium of mine, you who understand my silence, you who have loved me. Have I ever hidden anything from you ? Am I not eloquent ? Have you not surprised my inmost soul ? Give it the necessary words, but, while you do so, keep within it ! ”

I assure him whom I tenderly call my old daddy that I will do as he asks. I have

listened to his confidences and will endeavour to set them down religiously, in honour of so praiseworthy a memory.

8

“Monsieur Poire” divulged to me, first and foremost, his opinion of himself. It was bound to be pretty favourable, for he considered himself indispensable to the harmony of the world. His opinion of himself, then, is as follows :

“I am a natural child, as were Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci.

“Maeterlinck is my god ; and his shadow is my country.

“I have no family, no religion, no principles.

“My conscience is enough for me.

“I have seen everything and understood everything. I have not wasted my time, as human beings do, in seeking the meaning of life. I discovered it at my birth : it is obedience.

“I despise money, which human beings run after, and glory, which turns their heads.

“ I have judged society and its values, its ladder, which you have to descend so that you may seem to climb, and all its ridiculous train of vanities.

“ I possess all the virtues. I am generous and brave ; small animals I protect ; all those which dare to be bigger than myself I attack.

“ I love all human beings ; I have learnt that the habit does not make the monk ; and I make a profession of silence.

“ I am modest ; my master cannot work without me, but I lay no claim to recognition as his collaborator.

“ I believe in my god.

“ I believe in the sun. I am eternal.”

9

And here is his verdict on us :

“ I like them. They attach great importance to good food and they cannot do without a garden, even in town. Before I belonged to them, I lived for a week with other gods ; they had nothing of the kind. They would not let me in anywhere ; I had to surprise

the secrets of their life by sniffing at the doors. They did nothing but eat, sleep and talk. I used to see them amuse themselves for quite a long time with small pieces of cardboard, which they exchanged very solemnly ; also with balls, which they pushed across a table with long sticks. Twice I went out with them. It was terrible ! After a very pleasant drive, I found myself in a forest swarming with feet, skirts and trousers. I felt like suffocating ! When I managed to get my nose outside, I saw that they were busy making horses run round and round and shouting very loud.

“ The second time, I saw them fire guns at some birds as these escaped from a box. I walked away in disgust ; and it was then that I was taken prisoner by a man who sold me in the street next day.

“ My new gods have other eccentricities. In their house everybody lives in such silence that I have decided no longer to give warning when people come near. For that matter, I regard mankind as inoffensive and incomprehensible. I have seen badly-dressed people who were extremely kind ; others, on the contrary, who were well-dressed,

amused themselves, as I said, in killing innocent creatures ! So you see !

“ Here the gods are always busy with paper. They look at it for hours together, or else they scratch upon it. She goes mad at times, nice to me though she is, and starts banging on a piece of furniture which emits an insufferable din. Or else she opens her mouth, as if she meant to swallow a leg of mutton, and screams until you would think that she must rouse the neighbours.

“ Apart from this, I have no fault to find with them. They have a respect for time and for my hours of rest. Habit, a goddess whom I revere, is all-powerful in this house. This is due more particularly to my master, for my mistress adores travelling. I loathe it ! She is also fond of the theatre, which is the stupidest thing that I have ever seen. Just imagine pasteboard streets, pasteboard trees, pasteboard houses, mountains and rivers ! What is amazing is that I saw a pasteboard partridge served on a table and people pretending that it was delicious !

“ I visited the theatre on another occasion ; there were people and little children and lights. There was dancing and singing. All

this was absolutely wearisome, but suddenly I beheld a wonderful and miraculous thing. There was a dog, dressed like a man! I never saw anything so lovely. Panting, with eagerness, I tried to leap over every obstacle, to make my way to him and beg him to teach me his secrets. I was cruelly held back. My delirium knew no bounds when he began to speak, in yelping accents. But at the same moment I saw a cat, who also spoke and was dressed like a prince. My hatred mingled with my enthusiasm. I yelled! They had to take me out and shut me in the cloak-room: I was going crazy.

"Since then a vision haunts me night and day. They had no tails. Why?

"The theatre is really a ridiculous place.

IO

"The days go by, uniformly delightful. All the morning I work with my master; then I lunch with the two of them; I take my afternoon nap beside him. I go with him when he takes a walk. I generally hold him on the lead, because of the carriages and the trams, which are dangerous.

“About six o'clock we go in to read the newspaper. We dine ; and the evening is spent by the fireside.

“He reads. I admire him.”

II

I continue to surprise Golaud's memories. It amuses me to find intact in his great, massive head the little incidents that had faded from our own recollection :

“To-day,” says Golaud (he always says to-day, for his short memory is occupied exclusively by powerful and instantaneous impressions), “to-day my mistress, lifting her finger, to emphasize the importance of the event, spoke one word to me :

“ ‘ Motor-car ! ’

“I gave a cry of joy ; I leapt up to her face ; I spun round and round, frantically, to express my pleasure. Now I am feeling uneasy and waiting : if we are going for a drive, my happiness is complete ; but what if it means a journey ? My passionately curious nature does not dislike the vicissitudes of the journey : storm, snow,

wind and all the accidents which are so fruitful a source of distraction ; I also like the break-downs of the car, which allow one to stretch one's legs, and the halts in the villages ; but I dread the hotels. The smarter they are, the less consideration they show me. Some even go so far as to refuse to let me enter them ! And those which do receive me are nearly always low places, devoid of every comfort. This is a problem which I cannot hope to solve ; but it makes travelling highly disagreeable.

“ Meanwhile everybody is scurrying to and fro, running in and out of the house. Even the god is not working. I have watched patiently ; and I don't understand a thing of what is happening.

“ It's not a drive. But is it a journey ?

“ The house looks quite different. It is as dark as the grave ; and all the furniture is shrouded and asleep. I went up to a chair to obtain an explanation or two ; but suddenly it turned spiteful and stung my nose ; and I had a violent fit of sneezing. What is more, I observe that the gods also are sneezing. It is the revenge of inanimate objects.

“ The kitchener likewise has been wrapped

up ; and the saucepans are covered with a great sheet. We therefore had to go to a restaurant, which seemed to annoy the gods. How inconsistent of them : lunch was execrable, but my mistress laughed ! *He*, fortunately, did not laugh, for there was nothing amusing about it. And then he said that he felt as savage as a dog !

“ What injustice ! Am I not always good-tempered ?

12

“ Now I understand ! What with watching and listening, I understand ! The journey is to be a short one, but we shall be very long away. They are going to stay in the country ; and it is to preserve the house that they have been wrapping it up all day. Oh, if I could only advise them ! For I understand the wickedness of things : they start playing the moment you take your eyes off them. Do what you will, they love the sun, which makes them go pale, moisture, which makes them grow limp, and heat, which makes them swell ; and they become a swarming city filled with a little world of enemies, who gnaw them, make holes in them

and destroy them, but who make them alive in their turn ! I say nothing of the dissolute behaviour of the water-pipes, gas-burners and taps, or the invasion of rats and mice ! What an orgy ! The gods had done better to leave me and the cook to look after the house ; but . . . they can't do without me.

“ While I am making these reflections, we are rushing along at full speed. It is at such times as these that I most fervently admire my god. I am convinced of his power. If he gets out, the car stops ; and, the moment he gets in again, it growls, leaps forward and devours space. I can imagine nothing more wonderful. In order to be nearer to him and the better to watch the road, I climb upon my mistress' knees, trampling upon her and crushing her when the unevenness of the ground jolts the car. At first she protests and puts me back in my place, between their legs. There I can see nothing and I cannot breathe ; but I besiege her afresh, continuing and repeating the process until I triumph.

“ Men know so little of perseverance ! Yet nothing can resist it ! It opens doors,

it throws down walls, it removes mountains. It would even eat up the sirloin . . . if the sirloin lasted a little longer ! ”

13

We have arrived at Saint-Wandrille ; and for Golaud life is a series of surprises. His sense of logic is completely upset by the Abbey :

“ What sort of home is this ? ” he thinks. “ You can’t tell where it begins and where it leaves off ! I have lost touch of my duties and my rules. When I think I am out-of-doors, I am still indoors. I come across posts which have to be respected as though they were priceless cushions. There is a place which they call the cloisters, which has to be treated like a drawing-room, though I find earth there and sky and stones and very ancient odours which inspire me. On the other hand, there is a church in which I can roam about freely and in which there is much to delight me. Birds build their nests in it ; rats and mice arrange their meetings within its walls ; and I get some glorious

hunting there. I also go hunting in the woods with my god, but that is a very different thing.

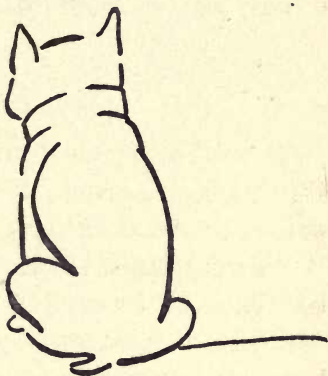
"We set out at sunrise; the tall grass drenches my belly; I pass through cobwebs which catch my nose and tickle my ears. These are great times. For hours together I see nothing but the soles of my god's boots; but my imagination is all-powerful: I already smell the gunpowder and the hare which I shall soon be pursuing. My loins quiver; and at the god's least sign I am off like an arrow from the bow. We nearly always come home without having fired a single shot. He is deplorably absent-minded and has no nose! But I return happy just the same; and I am equally delighted each time he suggests that we shall go out shooting. Here again I am superior to man, for my powers of hope are inexhaustible.

"Fishing gives me less pleasure but greater cause for pride, since it is I who do everything. We both of us sit beside the river, in an intimacy which is increased by a prudent silence. He baits his hook and casts it; and we wait. . . .

"The water trembles before me, the

branches bow before me and the breeze brings me news. . . .

“But presently my master grows weary. Men are fickle creatures. He lays down his line, lights his pipe and takes out a book. Now he will see nothing, feel nothing more! All is lost if I do not intervene. This is where my triumph begins. This is where my patience tells! My patience is perfect, absolute, immovable, incorruptible. It was handed down to me from father to son, so that I might watch the holes of



GOLAUD FISHING.

“The water trembles before me, the branches bow before me and the breeze brings me news.”

rats and mice ; but my highly developed intelligence finds more than one use for it.

“So I sit and watch. My eyes never leave the float which lies on the surface of the water. The hours pass ; I forget everything. People may call me ; the bell may ring ; thunderstorms may rage ; but we no longer

exist : he reads ; I fish. Suddenly the float dips into the water and I utter an exclamation ; he understands. A trout is dancing at the end of the line.

“ At close of day, we bring the cook a basket of fish ; and at night they give me the heads.

14

“ I am beginning to grow accustomed to this strange house. But I have had to institute a new code of laws.

“ Being indispensable to the happiness of the gods, I have little leisure. I therefore yield to their whims ; and, because, when they are here, they cherish an incomprehensible liking for certain old heaps of stone, all stones have become sacred to me. I don't know what I shall do when I get back to town, with its irresistible streets and posts ! However, I prefer not to think about it.

“ I have given up trying to understand the limits of the rooms. I consider that I am out-of-doors when I no longer see any wall on the horizon. In this way I have recovered the certainty which is essential to my happiness.

"Certainty wraps my mind as in a garment, whereas men's intelligence is liable to mistakes and leads them astray, causing them great unhappiness."

15

"The donkey has come.

"The donkey is detestable. The donkey is horrible. The donkey is my deadly enemy.



"Certainty wraps my mind as in a garment, whereas men's intelligence is liable to mistakes and leads them astray."

"I hate him. I hate him as I hate the motor-cycle! My mother addresses him in the most endearing terms; and the god himself mounts on his back and rides him. It is intolerable. This morning I slipped into the stable and bit his fetlocks. Ah, if I only dared exterminate him! They wanted to photograph him and me together. I turned my back, to express the contempt with which he inspires me.

"He lives in a shed near the motor-cycle. I conjure heaven to heap every disaster upon

these my enemies : upon the motor-cycle, because it carries my god away so swiftly and so far that I cannot follow him ; upon the donkey, because he robs me of a share of affection and esteem !

“ Has heaven taken pity on my sufferings ? The motor-cycle is ill ! When it is touched, it pants, spits, coughs out all its breath and does not start. As for the donkey, he is angry with the god. They are on the very worst of terms.

“ My master makes it his practice to gather the fruit himself. He goes to the kitchen-garden with a large basket, in which he carefully places the ripe pears, one by one. I remain close at hand, for he could not do this without me. Well, this morning, this very morning, not long after the donkey's crime had been discovered, as we were busy picking fruit, I saw Cadichon—that is my enemy's name—enter the kitchen-garden, the gate of which had been left open by inadvertence. He is forbidden this part, for he behaves very badly there, having a vulgar passion for raw vegetables. I took good care not to warn my master ; and I watched the donkey, hoping that he would commit some fresh crime.

“What happened surpassed my fondest hopes. Crushing the strawberries, blundering against the peas, ill-treating anything that he was unable to appreciate, he filled himself gluttonously with carrots and potatoes. Then, replete, he waved his tail with satisfaction, tossed his head until his fringe hung all crooked and stopped to think. I and my master had finished our visit to the espaliers ; my master was just about to turn round ; he was sure to seize a stick and give the donkey a thrashing. I was ravished with delight ; but fate had even greater happiness in store for me.

“ ‘ Good-day, Monsieur Mètrelingue ! ’ cried a loud voice : no peasant can ever pronounce my master’s name properly.

“ ‘ Good-day ! ’ replied my master, raising his head to see who was calling to him over the wall.

“ And a conversation ensued. This was too much for Cadichon ; an idea entered his mind. Softly he approached the basket. Within it lay the magnificent yellow pears, arranged in serried rows. They exhaled an odour which I do not care for, but which the gods consider exquisite. The donkey

sniffed at them : he seemed about to eat one, two, three of them ! My heart thumped ; my loins quivered. Actuated by a sense of the justest vengeance I wished that I could call out to the noodle to hurry up, to eat them, to grab the lot ! But he had thought of something better ; and here I must really bow my head in admiration. Donkeys have a truly Machiavellian subtlety in the art of wrong-doing ! Methodically, daintily, if I may say so, Cadichon imprinted upon each of the pears, one after the other, the mark of his long, yellow teeth !

“He had finished defiling the last pear when the god turned round. I had just time to absorb myself in the study of a tree-trunk which was luckily within reach of my nose.

“It was a wonderful moment. The god, indignantly brandishing a stick, ran after the fleeing animal ; the peasant scrambled over the wall and, sharing my master's exasperation, rushed off in pursuit of the caitiff. He was very soon caught and received a correction which fell like an adorable caress upon my soul, after which he was firmly tied up in his stable. My master de-

clared that it will be some time before he leaves it.

“Unfortunately, when my mistress was told of the two crimes committed by the blackguard Cadichon, she laughed like a maniac, saying what a witty creature that donkey was !

“Women certainly are absurd !

16

“Now that I have got accustomed to this queer house, I like it. It is full of unforeseen pleasures.

“This morning, after our work—we are just finishing a book—my master said :

“ ‘ Come, we’ll go skating ! ’

“I had never seen this done and I was at first astonished to see him fasten little wheels under his feet ; but I at once grasped that my speed had made him jealous and that he had contrived this way of running as fast as I can ; it’s a charming idea. With his pipe in his mouth and his hands in his pockets, he glided through the great apartments of the Abbey ; and I accompanied him, gambolling by his side !

“To-day I have saved my mistress’ life.

“She had had the imprudence to enter, without me, a portion of the Abbey to which nobody ever goes (being always indispensable, I ought really to have the power of dividing myself in two; but, as I can’t do this, regrettable accidents must occur sometimes). A heavy door closed upon her and imprisoned her. She called in vain; and the hours went by.

“The better to enjoy my triumph, I allowed the anxiety to become general; then, guided by my nose, which nothing can escape, I rushed upon the scent. I soon found her trail and the wicked door, through which her cries for help could hardly find their way. I scratched at it violently, to let her know that I had come to the rescue; and then, breathless and excited, with my eyes starting out of my head, I went back to the god. For all my eloquence, I could not make myself understood at once (I do not question his divinity, but I do sometimes doubt his intelligence). Still, at last he consented to follow me; and, after some

little difficulty, my mistress was set free. She was extremely hungry; and the manservant at once put before her a magnificent mess, which we shared together.

18

“ I have discovered a breach or two in the wall ; and, when I have a little time to spare, I repair to the town hard by.

“ With my nose glued to the ground, I move at a short trot, without stopping. I pretend not to see anything, not even the enemy dogs who have the bad manners to be larger than myself. What is the use of fighting when there is no one looking on ? I keep close to the walls, hedges and houses. My behaviour is correct ; the people who pass me do not notice me. Experience has taught me to act thus when alone, lest I should run the risk of vexatious misunderstandings.

“ In the town it is different : every one respects me there. I am saluted by name in the most friendly fashion. It is then that I linger over really refined pleasures. Beside the quay are large barrels, oozing their

contents in the sunlight ; these I inspect minutely ; then I run through the streets.

“ Having finished my stroll, I enter the café. Men are at their best when they are drunk, only you have to know how to take them.

“ I am welcomed, as a rule, with scant courtesy, especially when it is raining :

“ ‘ Clear out, you dirty cur ! ’ they cry.

“ Then I slip under the tables and wait.

“ They drink, laugh, and sing ; suddenly they notice that I am still there :

“ ‘ Look, he’s got a good head, that tyke ! ’

“ All’s well. I may sit on an upholstered bench ; and in a moment they will be offering me sugar.

19

“ A great box has come. I hear them say :

“ ‘ It’s the Italian bees.’

“ A glass bee-hive is set up in the drawing-room ; my mistress scatters large drops of honey and jam on the table-cloth ; my master brings out paints and paint-brushes ; and, when the insects come out to eat, he marks each of them with a spot of a different colour.

" Since then there are endless discussions about the Reds, the Blues, the Yellows and the Greens.

" I pity them when I see their difficulty in understanding the simplest things !

" They think they know everything because they can talk ; and it's their language that leads them astray. They think they understand a thing when they have given a name to it ; but I ask you, what does that prove ? I was still a mere puppy when all the secrets of the life of the bees were revealed to me ; but they used to sting my nose and I broke off all relations with that nation of crabbed old maids.

20

" We have been asked to take charge of a dog. He does not offend me, because he is small ; but to my thinking he dishonours our race.

" Can a thing like that be called a dog ? He creeps along the ground like a caterpillar, twists about, gets excited, frisks, leaps, dances and raises protests against everything on any and every pretext. He steals, gnaws, bites and destroys anything that

comes within range of his teeth. With his short legs, he is as tricky as a hooligan and forces the doors of the kitchen cupboards and dresser. With his long, pointed nose he lifts the lid of the sugar-tin and eats up all the sugar. He destroys clothes and respects not a single thing. What can I expect of such a companion ? To-day he ate up three



"Philippe, the professor of order !"

hats, two fur stoles and three slippers. Instead of smacking him, my mistress said :

" ' We shall have 'to shut the wardrobes now and keep everything very tidy ; ' and, with a laugh, she called him, ' Philippe, the professor of order ! ' "

" I feel there is a certain dignity attaching to this title ; and I am annoyed, painfully annoyed.

" At last his mistress came to fetch him ; and they went off to Nice. To have done with this absurd animal and to give my readers some idea of his pretentious character, I will relate our last conversation, which took place when I met him again in the south :

“ ‘ As you see,’ he said, in his usual fatuous tone, ‘ I am in form, as usual. I am very well and am being tremendously spoiled ; but I am sick of this place, where there is nothing to interest my nose. The countryside, the gardens, the high-roads, the very streets all smell of orange-blossom. It’s disgusting ! Well, I give rein to my activity indoors. I destroy the curtains, carpets, slippers, valances, door-mats and so forth : everything, in short, that my zeal can discover. I work like mad. Here, however, they do not call me ‘ the professor of order ; ’ they give me the most awful whackings ; but I laugh at those. I prefer anything to boredom, which gnaws worse than any rat and which you cannot drive away.’ ”

“ I eyed him scornfully from head to foot ; but he took no notice.”

21

Golaud’s happiness is endangered. A positive catastrophe is threatening his enjoyment of life. Yet another dog is on his way to us ! He has been travelling for several days, from cage to cage, at the mercy of mankind :

how could we, without brutality, send him home again ?

The problem is a serious one, for I know how jealous Monsieur Poire can be and, in my affection for him, I am loth to pain him by inflicting a rival upon him.

The stranger has just lost his god ; and his mistress, who is old and very badly off, cannot continue to feed him. His coming was preceded by a letter in which she begged us to accept him, and in which, describing her dear Azor, she said :

“ He’s as sound as a bell and smells like a bird.”

This delightful expression, accompanied by a certain picturesqueness of spelling, disposes us in the orphan’s favour.

He has arrived. He is a sheep-dog. He has an exuberant nature and a heart overflowing with love. This love he is perpetually offering us, leaping heavily around us, tossing his woolly stalactites. He knocks against everything, breaks everything, dirties everything. Accustomed as he is to the kennel and the chain, he will have to continue his harsh destiny on the threshold of the Abbey.

And Golaud, who refuses any form of ser-

vice, will, I hope, understand that this subordinate can never put him in the shade, in spite of his great stature.

22

Here is Golaud's opinion of Azor :

“ A new dog has been admitted to the house. What a number of dogs there are upon this earth and how difficult it is to reign alone !

“ Fortunately this one is a poor creature ; and his very character enables me to ignore him. He has but one thought, which is to watch the people who go in or out. He cannot sleep for it ! Fastened near the front-door, he gives a frantic yell the moment any one appears, no matter who. What a strange condition of mind !

“ If a member of the household passes near him, he rears up at the end of his chain, giving the most frenzied leaps. He upsets his kennel, his pan, his water-trough ; then, restless and feverish, with a parched tongue, he looks for his water, not understanding that the earth is also thirsty.

"For the rest, he does not trouble me in any way. I can avoid him whenever I feel inclined, but I cannot understand why the gods put up with this noisy and indiscreet animal.

"I despise Azor and his absurd mania.



AZOR.

"I despise Azor and his absurd mania. For me, barking is merely a means of opening doors."

For me, barking is merely a means of opening doors."

Alas ! Poor Azor, who had come from the land of sunshine, could not get used to our Norman mists. Six months later he died.

The old woman was always asking for news of her dog. How—and why—should we announce that he was dead ? Every month,

as long as she lived, she received a post-card to assure her that he was perfectly happy and had nothing the matter with him.

Was it not the truth ?

24

Thus for many long years Monsieur Poire's sober and regular existence ran its course. He had a peculiar sense of plan and distance ; he seemed to understand all the complexities of social life ; he was a perfect traveller. We never had to worry about him. We would arrive in a strange town and lose him ; he would look for the car, find it and sit down inside, in spite of the people about the garage.

One day we went to look at a church, leaving him outside ; we forgot all about him and went out by another door. Golaud waited for us in vain ; at last he went back to the railway-station, hunted out our luggage in the cloak-room and lay down in front of it. All this was done with such calmness, dignity and assurance that the porters stood amazed, took notice of him and never thought of driving him away.

He met with more than one accident, for

he was of an adventurous spirit and knew no fear of man. He had faith in mankind, the dear dog ! And he understood a great many things, but he did not suspect the existence of evil.

One day he returned to the Abbey limping and moaning with pain. He had been violently beaten, so cruelly ill-treated indeed that he nearly died. For six weeks he underwent the most agonizing treatment with a touching understanding ; day after day he licked the hand of the veterinary surgeon who came to torture him. The surgeon, an old man with a heart hardened by forty years' practice, was astonished at Golaud's endurance and declared that he had never known such a patient.

Scarcely had he recovered from this long illness when a fly containing four persons ran over his body. It was in a street at Dieppe, on a market-day. A crowd gathered round the cab ; I called Golaud ; a pack of nasty street-boys stood and jeered at me :

" Your old tyke ; ugh, he's squashed flat ! "

I rushed forward, venting my fury on the people, and carried my poor dog into a chemist's shop. He was absolutely unhurt !

Another time it was a motor, a huge limousine, which went bouncing over his head, without injuring him ! Yet nothing affected his trust in humanity and motor-cars. Both were wonderful and kindly powers which could not do him harm.

25

Nevertheless, there were dramatic moments in his private life. I refer to our theatrical performances at Saint-Wandrille. Accustomed as he was to take part freely in all that happened, he might easily have gone about everywhere, among the spectators or the actors ; he was capable of taking a friendly leap into the lap of Banquo's ghost or of wriggling comfortably across King Duncan's blood-stained bed. On this occasion his physical peculiarities were against him. He had to be carefully shut up, while his rival Azor, on the contrary, a sort of sinister Don Quixote, very black and lean, was released and allowed to prowl around Macbeth, in the happiest manner, while the Thane of Cawdor, dagger in hand, delivered the soliloquy that precedes his crime.

Dear Monsieur Poire, so artlessly devoid of style, this was the only time that I ever caused you pain during all the fifteen years that we spent together. It must have seemed unjust, for you were so well-pleased with your short, fat figure, your stump of a tail and your ears, which stood up like two little motor-horns from your broad forehead. To soften those dismal hours, I myself shut you in, with tender words ; I supplied your prison with luxurious cushions ; I placed your favourite cakes beside you. But you touched nothing, thereby giving me to understand that you were not taken in. Daddy, daddy, do you forgive me after all ?

26

A window is open to the blue sky, a perfect blue. Golaud is sitting at it, looking out at . . . what ?

There is nothing, nothing but a square of blue enamel.

My curiosity aroused, I lean over him and discover that his nose is working feverishly.

He is engaged in converse with the wind, a conversation of intense interest, which

sends surreptitious quivers running through his loins.

Evidently he is tasting joys with which human beings are unfamiliar. He keeps up relations with nature of which we know nothing. In the garden, amid the green and uniform swaying grass, does not the couch-grass take pity on his innocence and say :

“ Eat me to cool your stomach ? ”

27

Golaud rejoices in the summer ; and I admire him.



He is engaged in converse with the wind.

No mental image disturbs his beatitude. As he lies outstretched, with paws relaxed, none of his senses awakens his little brain, which is everlastingly asleep ; but each of them, like the selfish servant that it is, enjoys its own pleasures, without troubling its master. Suddenly and quickly he rises to his feet, twitches his ears as though to make

a sign of understanding to some invisible power, then turns about and methodically lies down again.

28

Golaud, seated on a bench, is watching something. An enormous bumble-bee is



Monsieur Poire knows his insects
as well as any entomologist.

humming round a young flowering laburnum. In her sudden flight she seems to dash against invisible walls. Suddenly she pounces upon a flower, her hairy legs cling to its petals, she disappears into the

calyx, like a bead of jet, and the weighted flower bows its head.

Presently it springs up again, relieved of its burden: the burly visitor has departed. From garden to garden the busy glutton continues her thefts.

Golaud has contemplated her with interest, but without attempting to molest her. Twice

the bumble-bee has grazed his nose, but his heavy jaw did not even snap at her as she passed.

Monsieur Poire knows his insects as well as any entomologist ; he has the sense to respect those which sting and to indulge in harmless play with those which are harmless.

29

ADELAIDE

Adelaide died in the prime of life. Her years numbered one hundred and twenty. When Golaud first set eyes upon her, she was a puzzle to him.

He sniffed at her, touched her and, not in the least understanding her, considered her for several days. Then, having observed that no one ever petted her and that she cared for nothing but salad, he felt assured that she would not deprive him of anything ; and he conceived a certain affection for her.

He liked to sit down beside her, in the same patch of sunlight. Adelaide, who would withdraw shyly into her house at the least glance, supported Monsieur Poire's question-

ing gaze without confusion. She had no fear of him whatever and would sometimes allow him to rest his massive head upon the roof of her dwelling.

Now one day, as they lay side by side on the grass, both in solemn silence—for Adelaide was dumb—an idea occurred to her, a disastrous idea! She, so modest, so bashful even, wanted, Narcissus-like, to see herself mirrored in the limpid flood. Deliberately protruding her little arms and legs from under her big house, she set off slowly and heavily, tracing in the long grass a path as wide as her shell.

Presently, for the distance was short, she reached the edge of the pond. There, with outstretched neck, she seemed to take her bearings. Her slender head, straining forward, groped in the air, which seemed, for her, to be a tangible thing; and then, suddenly, she fell like a stone. Circular ripples formed on the surface of the water, spreading and spreading, bearing witness once again to her presence. Then they faded away; and all was over.

Adelaide was no more. Monsieur Poire, who had followed his play-fellow, saw her

disappear without grasping what had happened ; and it was a long time before the gardener gave up looking for the tortoise.

30

I have counted the words which Golaud understood and have interpreted them in the light of his impressions and character. Here they are :

GOLAUD'S VOCABULARY

SILENCE.—The superiority of the canine race.

SPEECH.—The inferiority of the human race.

FIRE AND SUNLIGHT.—A magnificent invention of mankind to warm me out of doors and in. Unhappily it is a whim of theirs to put out the fire at frequent intervals and to cover the sun with great black bags. When these burst, you get drenched.

THE SEA.—My foot-bath.

THE COUNTRY.—My kingdom.

THE WIND.—The bearer of important news.

THE BREEZE.—The daily paper which tells

me every morning any interesting things that may have happened.

NIGHT.—A great curtain, which men draw over the sky each day, so that I may sleep more soundly.

STREETS.—Places full of delightful surprises.

POSTS.—Revered muses that have inspired me with my most beautiful poems.

STICK.—An object invented for chastising ordinary dogs.

FLIES AND CATS.—Hateful animals whom it is my mission to destroy.



KENNEL.—A box for animals to live in.

Hateful animals whom it is my mission to destroy.

HOUSE.—See *Kennel*.

KITCHEN.—An enchanted palace.

DINING-ROOM.—A sacred place in which dogs say their prayers.

ARM-CHAIRS.—Treacherous divinities, incapable of keeping a secret. Every arm-chair that I know has betrayed me.¹

¹ Golaud occupies arm-chairs only by stealth. The moment he hears his master's step, he hastily quits the

DUST-BIN.—The poor dogs' canteen.

SHOES, HAT, WALKING-STICK, OVERCOAT.—

Mysterious objects which the gods put about them to announce that they are going for a walk.

SIRLOIN.—An incomparable delicacy, always forbidden.

CUTLETS.—Delicacies accessible as far as the bones are concerned.

SUGAR.—The reward obtained for performing actions which are ridiculous in themselves but delight the gods.

EARTH AND SKY.—The first supports me ; the second covers me. Together they form *Space*, in which I am contained.

31

GOLAUD'S TRAVELLING-IMPRESSIONS

Here are some of Golaud's travelling impressions :

“ After alighting from the train, we went to see a town which my mistress kept say-forbidden seat, but unfortunately a warm hollow invariably denounces his disobedience to orders. What a puzzle for Monsieur Poire !

ing was extraordinary. As a matter of fact there were no dogs, carriages, people, or streets ; but there were flights of steps and other terrifying things all over the place. The most terrible to my mind was that I had continually to walk on gratings, which showed the void below ; my feet, being smaller than my master's, kept slipping through the gaps. I decided to have done as quickly as I could with this town, which offered me nothing but deadly pitfalls ; and the moment I saw a way out I fled.

“ I very soon regretted what I had done. They had not selected their hotel : how was I to find them ? For a minute or two I was perplexed, remembering, in despair, that the motor-car had been left at home ; but it was the vision of the car that saved me. It reminded me of the train which had brought us ; and I next remembered the trunks, portmanteaux, umbrellas, rugs and so forth ; all those cumbrous impedimenta which I am so well able to do without ! Guided by my nose, I soon found the station and the place where these for once convenient objects had been deposited. There they were, amid mountains of bags and

parcels which incited me frequently to lift my leg.

“They had been placed on a shelf too high for me to reach, but their sweet scent relieved me of all anxiety. I sat down, so as not to lose sight of them. Idiots wearing caps with shiny peaks came and looked at me. I rolled such eyes at them that they deemed it prudent to avoid me.

“Unfortunately there was no food going in this place ; and time passed very slowly. It was long after dinner-time when I saw my parents appear at last. They were mourning my loss with a depth of feeling that flattered me. I was greeted with exclamations of delight. My father, who was greatly moved, declared that I was wonderful ; as for my mother, though I am much too heavy for her arms, she held me in her embrace for quite a long time, repeating, in loving tones :

“ ‘ You’re a dog of genius, you dear, dear Golaud ! ’

“The word ‘genius’ does not occur in my canine dictionary, which will refer you to the word ‘banquet.’ Turn up ‘banquet’ and you will find that it is ‘a sumptuous meal

offered to men who have become illustrious and who are commonly called men of genius.'

"As I am an honest dog, I shall wait for a week. If in a week from now they do not offer me a banquet I shall steal the pudding!"

32

SOME OF GOLAUD'S HOME IMPRESSIONS

"Each morning regularly, before I open my eyes, my god restores the colour of things. Thus I find my pleasures and occupations alike waiting for me.

"We go down into the garden. Why doesn't he make the sun shine every day? It's a mystery to me. While he amuses himself by looking at his flowers, I question the sky, the breeze and the smells which bring me the world's news. Then we go upstairs to his study. These are the painful hours of my life; and I have to steep myself in oblivion in order to get through them discreetly. There we remain shut up from nine o'clock to twelve, day after day! The torture of it! Nothing to do and nothing to look at!

“ My master bends over his sheets of paper, yielding to his incomprehensible passion for scratching and scratching away, without stopping.

“ No one enters the room, not even the sun, for the shutters are kept closed and the blinds down. There is no hope of the least distraction. Even the teasing of the flies would be a comfort, but it is too dark ; they sulk in their corners and do not budge.

“ What is a dog to do ?

“ Sometimes a ray of light creeps along the floor. Then I lie upon it, stretching myself out lengthwise in order to take full possession of it. . . .

33

“ My mistress is very much my master’s superior in one respect. She has no study !

“ It is her only point of superiority, to my thinking ; but it is an important point. With her there are no imprisonment and no prohibitions. She works anywhere and everywhere : in the garden, on the benches, on the grass, under the trees, in the shrubberies ;

she will remain in the same place for days together, but so long as I am with her I am free. I climb on her knees, I rummage in her pockets for chocolate, I take tea with her, I go away and come back again and I am never scolded.

“When she remains in her room I go in and out incessantly; she opens the door, patiently, and says, with unvarying tenderness :

“ ‘ What is it, darling ? ’ ”

“Of course I love my mistress, but how much more I should love her if she inspired me with a certain degree of fear !

34

“In the majestic dining-room the delicate moment of dessert has arrived. The god raises the cover of the cheese-stand; and the cheese fills the whole room with the most pungent smell. Yet no one has the least idea of punishing it.

“They say that men have invented numbers of things. What I say is, that they have invented injustice and mystery.

35

"After looking out at the night, which is dark and cloudy, my parents declare that the weather to-morrow won't be fit for a dog! I know what this means; and I shall take good care to go out to-morrow. I also know that water, so delicious when you are thirsty, is a horrid thing to have on your back; but the study of posts, gutters and the soil is essential to my happiness."

36

GOLAUD'S VIEWS ON BOXING

"One day I was lying stretched upon the gravel of the terrace. The sun covered me tenderly with its rays. My master was sitting on a bench a few paces away, reading and smoking his pipe.

"I felt very happy and congratulated myself on taking part in so well-ordered a life. And I fell asleep. . . .

"Suddenly a sprinkle of sand hit me on the nose. I drew myself up. What did I

see? My master, clad in a most unseemly fashion, with fists that had suddenly become enormous and a congested face, was rushing at a man whom I did not know, a murderer, no doubt, or a thief! . . .

"I did not hesitate for a moment. Carried away by my feelings, I leapt between the combatants. . . . Alas, the designs of men are past all comprehension! They were both of them angry with me; insults and blows conveyed the intimation that I was to keep my place, the place of a dog who must understand nothing, who must form no opinions and who may intervene only at the word of command! Helpless and deeply pained, I witnessed the fight, which lasted for a long time: a terribly long time it seemed to my exasperated nerves.

"At last they ceased fighting and went off to have a drink in the harbour, like two old friends! Did you ever know anything so insane?

"Since that day, this inexplicable incident has been constantly repeated. I ponder over it in vain. I shall never understand!

"Truly the gods have a knack of behaving in the most unexpected fashion!"

37

Here I owe it to the truth to confess that the career of this exemplary dog was at one time marred by what I may call a brief obliteration of the moral sense. If in my eyes he did not lose merit thereby, it was because it is obviously more admirable to return to the paths of virtue than never to depart from them.

What was it that happened within his mind? In the prime of his life his blind wisdom was transformed into a bitter, lucid philosophy; and to judge from his actions, which became suddenly dissolute, he seemed to be asking himself :

“Where has respect for my duties led me? Am I the happier for being perfect?”

“It is true that my parents spoil me; but should I not obtain even more by spoiling myself? They give me chicken-bones and fish-heads; with a little pluck could I not sometimes get hold of a fillet of sole or the wing of a fowl?”

“When I was courting the lady-dogs of the baker and the rector, did they not deceive

and basely betray me with villains who had this advantage over me, that they were free and could visit their mistresses at any hour of the day or night ?

“ I have understood men and adored them. How have they repaid my love ? A pork-butcher once pinned me to his shop-front ; a shepherd all but beat me to death ; a grocer thrashed me unmercifully ; others have insulted me ; and the majority have scoffed at my dignity.

“ I have always revered motor-cars ; not content with having no consideration for me in return, they have repeatedly made base attempts to murder me.

“ To please the gods, I have respected silence, order and discipline. And then, when my enemy, that stupid Azor, disappeared, they adopted a female sheep-dog, a fool who barks all day long and goes tearing through the rooms !

“ And flowers ! Flowers are things which are not good to eat and which smell bad ! That is my opinion ; and my opinions are sturdy, unshakable and everlasting, like myself. Nevertheless, to make myself agreeable to the gods, I have respected those

useless and insipid objects. This often implied an amount of application which was positively painful. And the sheep-dog makes havoc of the flower-beds !

“ I performed what I may call a canine feat of skill when I learnt to understand



“ They adopted a female sheep-dog, a fool who goes tearing through the rooms.”

what sleep means to others. How many times, during my god's afternoon doze, have I not resisted the temptation to exterminate the disrespectful fly that defied me by walking up and down his forehead ! But was he conscious of my courageous discretion ? Whereas the sheep-dog has awakened him

time after time by barking outside the house ; and he considers that natural !

" As for the god himself, ah, this is what breaks my heart ! He taught me to think and in so doing shook my faith. I have learnt to doubt his divinity ; and my happiness is at an end.



GOLAUD PHILOSOPHIZING :

" If he is omnipotent, why does he never finish the dish ? "

" One of my first discoveries was this : it is true that my god is great, for he eats whenever he likes ; but, if he is omnipotent, why does he never finish the dish ?

" From the day when I began to argue in this way, my peace of mind was in danger : I beheld all the imperfections of mankind.

Men's fickleness and injustice were what afflicted me most particularly ; next I came to perceive their vanity. They call us their humble brothers ; and meanwhile it is they who work and we who fold our paws ! They have with difficulty invented extraordinary things which enable them to see through walls, but we, their humble brothers, find our noses sufficient. I know when a stranger

enters the house ; and, when I am under the table, I know precisely at what moment the majestic sirloin is laid upon it.

“ Man says :

“ ‘ I think, therefore I am.’

“ I say :

“ ‘ I smell, therefore I am.’

“ Man again says :

“ ‘ To be or not to be.’

“ I say :

“ ‘ To eat or not to eat.’

“ The distance which divides us therefore is not very great. Oh, I am quite well aware of the objection which they would raise ! Speech, everlasting speech ! That wonderful mechanical device which leads their lives all astray and makes them love one another, quarrel and hate one another without knowing why ! If only they knew the harm it does them !

“ It may be that they have hearts like mine ; but this speech of theirs gets in the way and confuses everything. It is pitiable. For my part, when I love, I prove it ; they say it.

“ No, I certainly do not envy them their ridiculous device.

“On the whole, my mental development has brought me nothing but disappointment ; my life has been one long series of mortifications and sacrifices. I must not touch the meat ! I must never go to the larder or the sideboard ! I must never sleep on the beds or easy-chairs ! I must respect birds, guinea-pigs (which I find excessively exasperating), rabbits, fowls and their families ; I must respect gold-fish ; I must respect even the turf, ay, even stones ! I must respect . . . what else ? Why, everything ! That is easy to remember : everything ! My whole life is just one tissue of respect ! To please them I have repressed my instincts, lost my vigour, vitiated my sensibility, annihilated my passions, destroyed my tastes and stifled my desires ! And after I have done all this they call me the Superdog.

“I do not understand, but, as they speak this word in a tone of praise, I conclude that their wonderful device of language has displaced their centre of admiration. However, I love them in spite of it all ; and my heart is large enough to conceal both the world and my grief from my sight.”

38

Need I say that these reflections were highly disastrous to the worthy Golaud and that the Superdog deteriorated into an absolute hooligan ?

We were at that time living near Grasse, in a villa surrounded by grounds whose too-hospitable paths ran, without any intervening barriers, straight into the rose-fields and olive-orchards. The bull-dog, his faith once undermined, took advantage of these conditions.

He would be found in the streets of the town with an attendant train of vagrant dogs, his coat draggled, his eyes dull, his legs booted to the thigh with mud. He was giving free scope to his instincts. Everybody complained of him. Several bitches of good family were in trouble, thanks to Monsieur Poire. He went to the length of stealing a huge cheese from a dairy and a rich pie from the grocer's ! Evidently he was applying to his excesses the same qualities of intelligence and sagacity that had irradiated his virtues. Well might we anxiously ask ourselves where he would stop. Growing bolder and bolder, he committed some fresh crime daily. The

moment he came home, well knowing that punishment awaited him, he would deliberately go in search of his master. His penance accomplished, he would return to my side and seemed to say :

“ I shall do it again to-morrow, for the advantages outweigh the drawbacks.”



He came home,
well knowing
that punishment
awaited him.

Twice he was locked up ; and to obtain his release we had to pay a fine and give an undertaking to restrict a liberty which was proving so dangerous. But it was not easy to restrain him. First he managed to escape by slipping out of his collar ; next he gnawed through the cord which

held him prisoner. In the end we had to resort to sterner measures by shutting him up in a room. And all the time he was setting a most demoralizing example. This was where superiority had landed the Superdog ! I spent long hours with him to alleviate his grief, but resisted the longing to restore him to liberty : had he not lost the common-sense without which social existence becomes impossible ?

In the town, his enemies lay in wait for him. "People"—that terrible, crafty entity—had sided with the dairyman and the grocer; Monsieur Poire was condemned to death!

A month later, we thought that reflection and meditation had perhaps accomplished their sadly indispensable work.

Cautiously we opened the prison-doors to him.

He walked out gravely, without undue haste, and proceeded to seat himself on the front steps of the



GOLAUD'S REPENTANCE.

house, in view of everybody. There he remained for several days, resigned, dejected, but perfectly well-behaved.

Civilization had reconquered his soul.

39

GOLAUD'S VIEWS ON THE WAR

"A man has been to the village square banging two sticks on a drum. Another man

came and pasted big pieces of paper on the walls ; and a third rang the church-bell for a long time. Then the whole of life was completely changed from top to bottom.

“ In the fields the cattle cried in vain for water. In the farmyards my colleagues gave voice to their anxiety by howling. I, for my part, am silent, as always ; and I observe things sadly, for Habit is overthrown and my happiness is destroyed.

“ One hardly has time to sleep or eat. In the morning people sit waiting for the newspapers ; in the afternoon they sit reading the newspapers ; and next day they begin all over again.

“ The god is altered beyond recognition. He no longer goes shooting, no longer goes fishing, takes me for no more walks and does no more work ! He devotes himself to strange occupations. To-day he spent his time fetching all the bottles from the cellar and putting some away in the attic, others under the floors, in the roof, in the rabbit-hutch and in the hot-water pipes. I followed him without understanding what he was doing. From time to time he would say :

“ ‘ If they do come, at any rate they sha’n’t have my wine ! ’

“ My mother did other things, equally ridiculous. She dug holes in the garden, in which she planted papers and books, weeping as she did so, to water them, I suppose !

“ Friends came and called, but took no notice of me. They talked solemnly, without entering the dining-room.

“ I no longer recognize a soul. Everything is changed. For me all happiness is at an end.

“ Only the sun still remains my friend, as warm, as kind as ever, unchanged, in fact ! He alone has escaped the madness of mankind. I can take refuge only in his rays.

“ What is happening ?

“ War, war, war !

“ I hear nothing but that word ; but why get so excited about it ? As though it were not the most natural thing in the world ! How could one live without fighting ? I fight when I am attacked ; and when I am not attacked I also fight. I don’t know why, but it is necessary.

40

"I shall not enlarge further upon their behaviour at this period. I lived in a constant state of anxiety and despair. They committed folly upon folly, giving up their motor-cars, installing themselves in an unknown château, among people whom I did not know, rushing about incessantly, deserting their home, making me travel like a parrot in a cage! Oh dear, oh dear! I saw them grow more and more senseless, insane, absurd, unrecognizable.

"And, when one day at last we returned home again, I found that Habit, my revered goddess, was also altered and that she would henceforth move with a limping gait!"

41

These were the last recorded words of my dear Monsieur Poire. The war undoubtedly shortened his life. He was too sensitive a dog not to be greatly put out by so many unexpected changes, all of them changes for the worse. One need not understand in order to suffer. Like all of us, Golaud suffered through the war.

What happened between him and his master? For a long time the one ceased working and the other contracted solitary habits. I soon noticed that the two friends no longer shut themselves up together in the study. The thing came about gradually, as is the way with profound disagreements in lives that have been lived in common. The dog struck me as looking sad. I asked Maeterlinck about it; and he answered, without a smile:

“Golaud has refused time after time to come and work with me!”

The case was really serious. In vain I tried to bring the two together. Both were blessed with a fair share of obstinacy; and they eluded all my attempts.

There were evidently grievances on both sides, as in all disputes. Did the dog regard the god's presence, a presence which deprived him of all comfort, as an insufficient compensation for the loss of the downy arm-chair which was so grateful to his rheumatism? Did the master grow tired of continually opening the door to meet the exacting demands due to Monsieur Poire's old age?

In any case, the ties between Golaud and

myself drew closer ; and the dog found in me the feminine indulgence which his venerable years and his many disillusiones seemed to call for.

He sank, rapidly and mournfully. Weary in body and spirits, he accepted without a struggle the things that formerly would have made him most indignant. Often he fixed a disappointed gaze upon us :

“ It is the end of all things ! ” he told himself. “ A cat is enthroned here ; a fox-terrier is continually visiting the house ; a tame mouse is allowed to walk up and down the tables ! Nobody gives any orders.” (He had become quite deaf.) “ I no longer have a name ; and the motor-cars have lost their powerful voices. I no longer have a master. They have done away with the cakes, the sugar and the sweets which I used to love ! I have seduced the sheep-dog ; and my descendants will go about looking ridiculous, with pointed noses and foxes’ tails ! ”

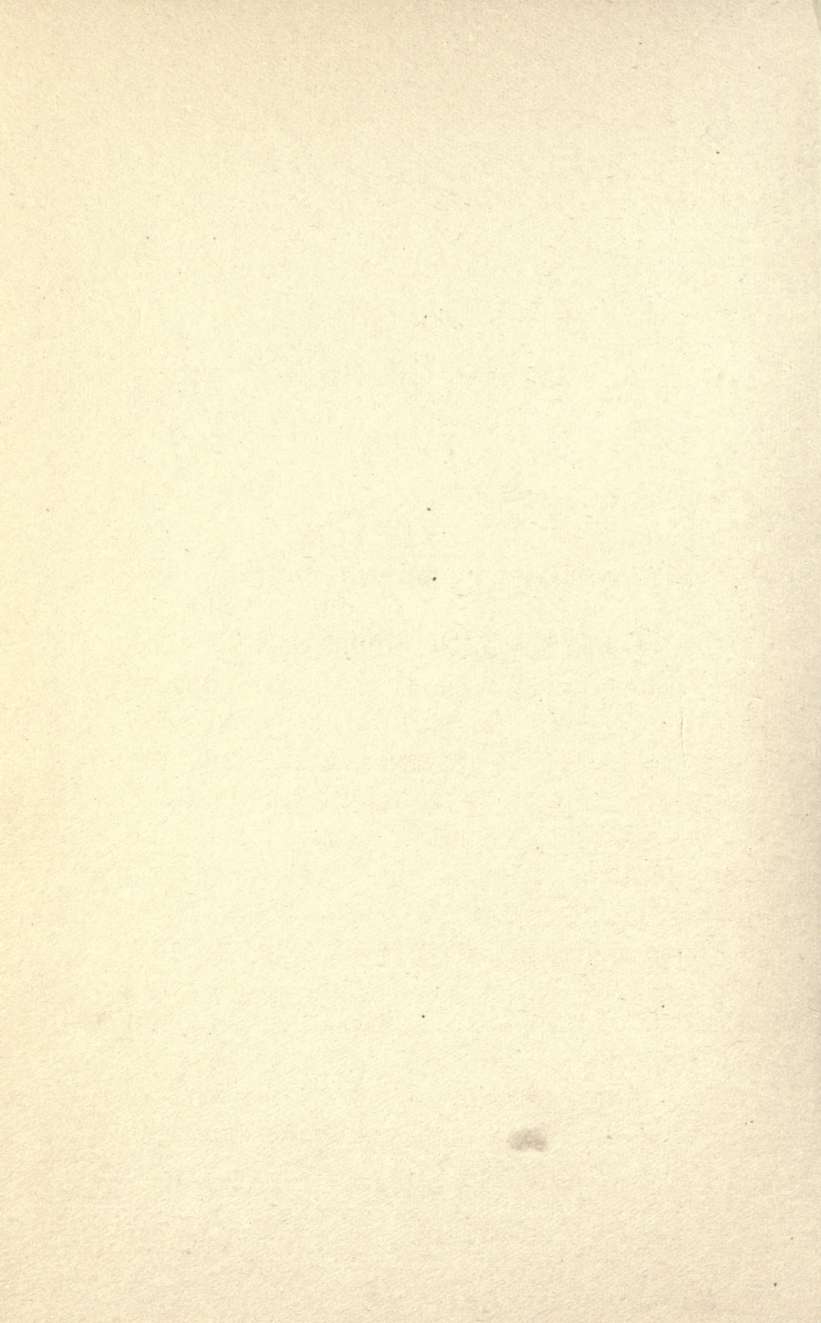
However, after these reflections, Golaud would attach himself to his master’s heels, reminding us of a broken musical-box which suddenly plays a few bars upon its cracked

and faltering keys. It is nine o'clock in the morning. The garden is flooded with the early golden light. Maeterlinck smokes his pipe, holds a book in his hand, inspects the roses. The two friends walk together as of old; but suddenly the dog stops, with his legs stiffened and his eyes staring. He no longer knows the thing to do. He has forgotten life. He lies down in a patch of sunshine and goes to sleep.

So the last days of his existence go by. It is the existence of an egoist, like that of old men who seem to be wisely taking leave of things before these abandon them for ever. A great weariness summons them to the bosom of Mother Earth; and they bow before it.

Happily age brings its compensations. To a dog is not deafness a kind of Nirvana? No more uneasiness; no more obedience. Golaud can sleep all the day long and nothing will come to disturb his rest. The world, the universe respect him.

CHAPTER VII
JULES THE SPONGER



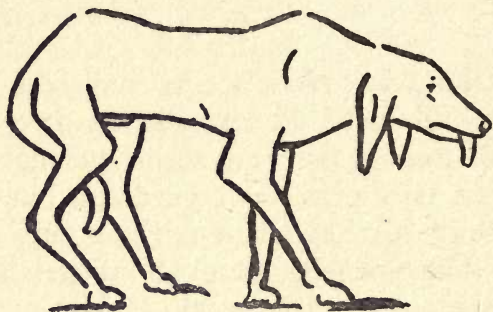
CHAPTER VII
JULES THE SPONGER

I

SORRY-LOOKING and unlovely, with a dull coat that has all the appearance of having been clumsily patched, the sponger is generally of medium build, as though he feared that he might occupy more space if he grew bigger and find it even harder to win a place in the world of dogs and men. He is preeminently humble, servile and discreet. He refuses to be snubbed ; his skin is impervious to insults ; he accepts a kick with an air of compunction.

Everybody has met beggar-dogs, those homeless outcasts who wander about the streets, snuffing at the doors for a scrap of bread or a bone. The sponger is bolder and more practical. He makes a masterful entrance into the house which he has selected and refuses to leave it. I remember one who,

quite against our will, shared our roof during one of our visits to the country and appointed himself house-dog to all the successive tenants, as though he had been included in the inventory of the villa, fulfilling his duties as its guardian without troubling in the least about those whom he was protecting.



Everybody has met beggar-dogs, snuffling at the doors
for a scrap of bread or a bone.

But the most typical sponger that I have ever met is the dog whom I have in mind at the moment. Here is his story: at Nice, last winter, I was gazing out of the window at the rain, falling, as it fell daily, in a dense, heavy downpour, confining all living things as in a watery prison. The garden seemed astounded under those troubled skies; the palms and cypresses had lost their dignity

and were tossing to and fro ; the leaves of the tall eucalyptus-trees bristled in the wind like a cock's feathers ; and the beautiful, many-coloured flowers were humbled to the earth, dragging their rain-filled calices over the muddy soil. In the midst of this pitiless deluge I beheld a strange dog entering our premises. He trotted along, without haste, but also without hesitation. I saw him climb the two terraces and turn towards the kitchen, into which he made his way. A few seconds later a door banged noisily and the cook appeared, brandishing a dish-clout and driving the stranger away. The dog retreated some little distance, then turned about and halted, as though to ask for mercy. His drenched figure was piteously dishevelled. Then he raised his miserable face to the window.

“ Let him stay for a little,” I said. “ It's raining so hard ! ”

I went downstairs to see him. He was a monstrosity, but irresistibly comical. Nature had evidently created him in a spirit of whimsical experiment. She was not satisfied with uniting in his person all the most dissimilar breeds of dogs. After surmounting

his pointed muzzle with the forehead of a tadpole, she had set in this flat, square forehead two little bird-like eyes, round, yellow, eager and ever anxious. His hairless tail was long, shiny and sinuous as an adder. All these items were arranged—I should rather say disarranged—about a small, thin body, scantily clad in a coat of discoloured fur that had come out of curl.

I turned towards the garden. Night was falling ; the furious downpour showed no sign of abating ; here and there on the terrace little lakes were forming and torrents of water were running and gurgling down the steep slopes of the garden-paths.

I repeated, in an unconvinced sort of way :

“It’s really raining too hard ; we must keep him.”

But a certainty was taking shape at the back of my mind : I should never have the heart to drive away anything so ugly and ridiculous !

And then that astonishing face was somehow not unfamiliar. It had long fascinated and puzzled me as a child. A drama of some sort was connected with those round, yellow eyes, that flat, square forehead. I

thought and thought : where, where had I known that face ? And suddenly from the depth of my memories a name emerged, a sharp, ringing syllable, shouted continually through the lofty rooms of a big house in a provincial town :

“ Jules ! Jules ! Bring me my boots ! . . .
Jules ! My muffler !
My pipe ! . . . Jules !
Jules ! . . . Where
the devil is that con-
founded Jules ? . . .
Jules, damn it,
Jules ! ”



JULES THE SPONGER.

There was a truly striking resemblance between the mongrel, with his crafty face, and the scoundrelly man-servant who, after ten years' service, had fled my parents' house, taking with him a considerable sum of money and the pretty lady's-maid from a neighbouring château. Once more I beheld Jules ! I had found him again ; and with him revived my memory of the drama which had disturbed the whole family and puzzled my youthful curiosity. I remembered it all in its slightest

details. But the new Jules, though his future good and bad fortune hung in the balance, did not appear anxious. He actually knew me better than I knew myself !

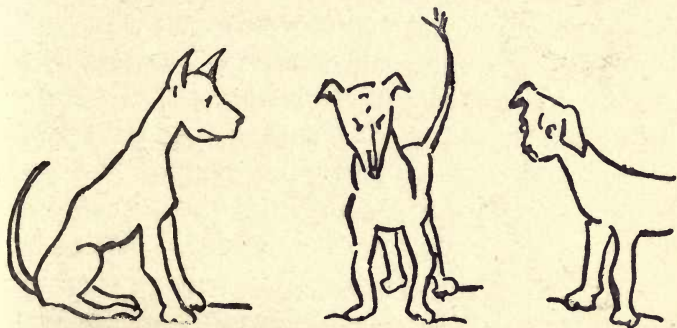
The rain was but a pretext : dogs are always aware, long before we are, of the things that interest them. The mongrel had selected our house ; he was to stay there.

" We will send him away to-morrow," I said, to end the matter ; and I weakly closed the door upon his nose.

2

Thus did Jules' life with us begin. With phenomenal skill he ingratiated himself into our existence and became, so to speak, encrusted in it. At the outset he made himself almost invisible ; he was always in hiding, always silent ; if we noticed him at all, we had a back view of him ; the most that we perceived was his snake-like tail escaping through a door or disappearing behind the bushes in the garden. He was modestly content to eat the remnant of the messes served to the other dogs. He did not even venture to go begging in the kitchen ; and

he never took the liberty of entering the living-rooms. Next he endeavoured to make himself useful. The chief entrance to the house was guarded by a great Alsatian sheep-dog, an imposing lady, who expected him to behave respectfully ; so he decided to keep watch at the kitchen-door. He also



He used to bring poor comrades to the house.

devoted some time to rat-hunting, but without success. When we came upon him, he would beat an unostentatious retreat, amiably wriggling the adder that was his tail.

3

Little by little, his character asserted itself. Jules was a philanthropist. He used to bring poor comrades to the house. Nothing

could be more comical than the sight of Jules' *protégés* solemnly waiting for alms at the kitchen-door! There was a dog blind of one eye, a lame dog, a bald dog, to say nothing of other curious phenomena which accomplished the miracle of being even greater monstrosities than their benefactor.



Solemnly waiting for alms at the kitchen-door.

Jules was familiar with all the habits of social life. He used to take the tram every morning of his own accord and meet the cook in the market. When he took the wrong car, he would jump off at the first stop and wait for another. The drivers and conductors were much amused and never drove him away.

But one particular exploit made him famous. The dog-catcher, the man known as the *Ciapacan*, the terror of the canine clan at Nice, had his eye on the poor devil. One day, on the Promenade des Anglais, he cast his fatal net over Jules. The mongrel, without hesitating for a moment, flung him-

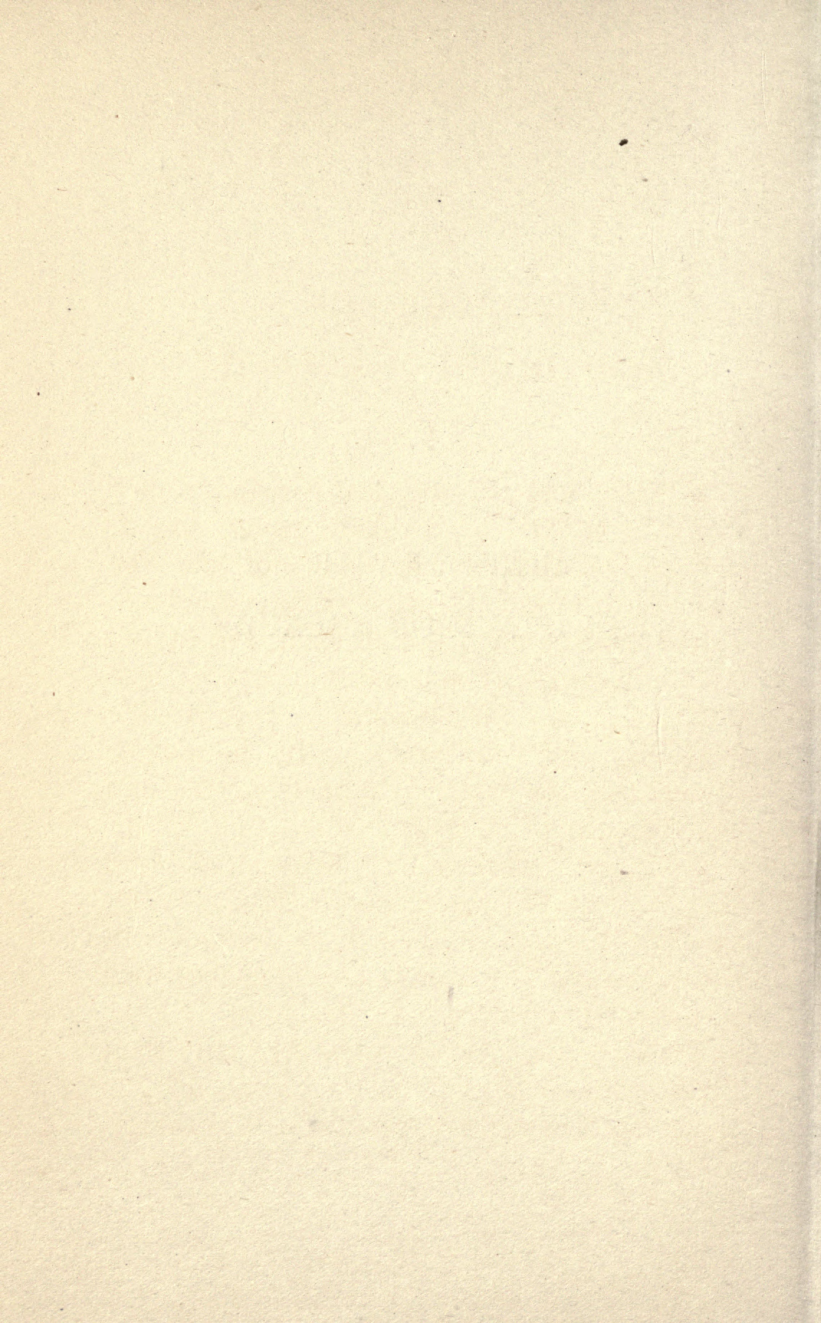
self into the sea, to the amazement of the on-lookers strolling along the front. The *Ciapacan* went off in a rage. Presently Jules emerged from the water, triumphant ; he was cheered and applauded ; and his mischievous little eyes seemed to twinkle with laughter.

Despite his good qualities and his laudable efforts, the mongrel's position in our household was ill-assured until one day I noticed that he had become the body-servant of our old dog Golaud. I cannot express the treasures of ingenuity which he expended to induce the bull-dog, whose masterful ways were only equalled by his superiority, to accept him. Golaud was suffering from rheumatism ; and his back, which was rather sparsely covered, bore witness to a life spent in too great comfort : Jules contrived to warm Golaud's legs for him by lying upon them ; and he would patiently rub his pointed nose along the bull-dog's backbone to allay its itching !

His destiny was assured. He won our respect.

But, at the end of a year, he disappeared even as he had come. He had no doubt bettered his situation.

CHAPTER VIII
THE DEATH OF GOLAUD



CHAPTER VIII
THE DEATH OF GOLAUD

I

THE loss of our dear Golaud was a blow which I shall never forget. Unfortunately he did not die the easy death which his great virtues deserved. I shall always, when I think of it, ask myself certain melancholy questions. Had he still a glimmer of consciousness? Did he see anything, feel anything? Did he for a second fear the friendly hand which he had licked so often?

We know that dogs have only visions and that they do not think, because they do not speak; but, though they do not possess our mental power, is it fair to conclude that they possess none of any kind?

Between the visions presented by their little brains may there not be some relation the sense of which escapes us? It is certain

that they love, that they do not love as we do, and—let us confess it—that they love better than we do, for their whole lives are at the service of their hearts.

Their love is blind, flawless, absolute and silent ; it knows no doubt ; and yet it is capable of suffering.

When we reflect that dogs have been known to die of grief, can we pretend that their darkness is without a single irradiating gleam ? The instinct that leads them to find their lost master, an instinct which for us has something magical about it, since it renders them capable of accomplishing that which our understanding will never accomplish, are we to deny it all perspicacity ? Must we conclude that it is wonderful only because it is quite unconscious and that our human love would have the same invincible power if it were not overshadowed by our loftier intelligence ?

2

For months, Golaud's health had been failing. His increasingly short sight exposed him to all kinds of mishaps. One day he was

discovered nearly drowned in the pond in which Adelaide committed suicide. He was continually stumbling and falling and colliding with things. Only a few precarious ties still bound him to his goddess, Habit. We had to begin thinking of how we should end his days. Our love for him became filled with anxiety. Would the kindest deliverance be a hypodermic injection of some poison or other? But chemists have been forbidden to sell poisons since the war. Any death not consecrated to the monster is apparently looked upon as a breach of the regulations.

3

Golaud is to die! They have laid him on a heap of cushions in the summer-house in the garden. He can no longer see nor hear nor smell; nevertheless he moans the moment I move away. How does he know that I am there?

I have placed a candle on the table; and I sit down beside our old friend and comrade. The cool of the evening enters through the broken panes.

Now and again he has a convulsive move-

ment, which uncovers him ; and his poor frame is revealed, all atremble. I keep on covering him up again and giving him water. His silence is a relief ; and I am angry with myself for that very reason. Would he suffer more if he could tell me that he was suffering ?

Sometimes I find myself addressing him aloud :

“ Yes, yes, my poor pet, you shall suffer no more after to-night, I promise you ! ”

I promise him death as the supreme comfort. I think of the revolver which would bestow it upon him ; and I am filled with loathing of our cowardice. . . .

4

Golaud is dead.

A kindly bullet has ended his dear little life.

Poor dog ! Did he understand ?

I have not been to look at him. I wanted to keep him in my memory alert, happy and assured of his own eternity ; but the mournful picture is none the less in my mind ; it pursues and hurts me.

I try to console myself, reflecting that no

one ever scolded him and that his happiness was great.

What could be pleasanter than the life of a beloved dog ? Our hurry to live alters our human destinies ; we know that nothing lasts for ever ; and this knowledge condemns in advance many things that come to life within us with imperishable energy. The dog, on the other hand, believes himself eternal ; his perfect love is like himself ; it is happy.

Golaud now lies at rest in the garden, in the shadow of a young mimosa-tree.

Sleep in peace, daddy dear, and let your jealousy be easy. There are new dogs in the house, but I shall not love them ! You will be the last dog to find a place in my heart !

CHAPTER IX
THE ANCESTOR OF THE KENNEL



CHAPTER IX

THE ANCESTOR OF THE KENNEL

HE has seen three generations come and go. He is a sage. He is solemn and meditative.

What does he dream of all day long? No



THE ANCESTOR OF THE KENNEL.

doubt of the mighty hunts of his youth, when, in the midst of the pack, panting in his pas-

sionate eagerness, he ran with the gay-coloured coats and quivered at the sound of the horn.

He is now taking his rest. His small, milky pupils no longer glisten between his bloodshot eyelids, even at dinner-time.

He is a disappointed animal. He has learnt that life is a great illusion and he has done with everything.

But the soul of a dog knows no bitterness.

THE END

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